Yale Law Secrets: An Outsider’s Guide to YLS

Let’s be real – not everyone walks into YLS with the same level of access. Some people have parents who are lawyers, took Con Law in college, and can name all of the justices of the Supreme Court, past and present. Others were the first in their family to attend to college, went to less fancy undergrad institutions, and have hardly any mentors with advanced degrees, let alone law degrees. Still other people fall somewhere in the middle, with less help from their family/undergrad background but a few years of employment under their belt and/or some solid experience in legal environments. But students are in the same boat in one key way: most know little if anything about most of what you’re in law school to learn. Differences at the outset aren’t necessarily determinative of your experiences in law school or thereafter, and with the possible exception of the single most prestigious and coveted positions, such as a clerkship for a “feeder judge” who sends clerks up to the Supreme Court, almost anything you might want to do will be within your reach if you work for it. For example, many Yale students, regardless of their backgrounds, get jobs at extremely prestigious law firms, secure very competitive public interest fellowships and clerkships, and end up with other terrific jobs. While foundational differences loom somewhat larger for people who want extremely prestigious federal clerkships or academic careers, even in these arenas, it is very possible for “nontraditional” students to succeed.

This guide is designed to help you understand the work you’ll need to do to build the career you want to have. It contains a lot of lessons my friends and I learned the hard way. Though I hope the contents of this guide will be helpful to all, it is especially designed for those who are in some way outsiders and feel out of place as a result of their race, gender, class, hometown, home state, family situation, undergrad institution, nationality, age, or other experience. These differences can create huge disparities of knowledge and access, but these can be mitigated with effort. The purpose of this guide is to make transparent information that is often passed through informal networks, which are less accessible to some students than others.

Although there are many existing guides that address the details of these topics more fully – for instance, Yale Law Women’s Student Guide and the numerous CDO and YLW publications referenced here – the difference between this guide and those is that I am writing as an individual, not an organization, and nothing prevents me from calling it like I see it. For the same reason, though, this guide is far more anecdotal and subjective than anything produced by YLS or YLW. You should consider everything contained here to be reasonable advice rather than authoritative truth, and any hard facts should be confirmed elsewhere.

**I strongly suggest that you skim through this entire guide at the beginning of law school rather than referring to individual sections only as specific decisions and application processes arise. This will help you avoid the phenomenon that prompted me to write this guide – the feeling of always being one step behind.** Although YLS and student groups offer information sessions on many of the topics covered here and are far more reliable sources for details about these processes, these sessions often come pretty late in the game, long after students in the know have already started taking steps toward their goals. Familiarizing yourself with the requirements for public interest fellowships, clerkships, firm jobs, and other positions will help you use your time wisely and strategize from the beginning.

While I do not support the pursuit of some of the goals described here – for instance, a perfect transcript that comes at the expense of exploration – I feel strongly that all students should have equal access to the information they need to achieve their goals, whatever they may be.

This guide was made with contributions and feedback from many other students, most of whom have asked to remain anonymous. Where attributed, others’ contributions to this guide should not be read as endorsements of the guide as a whole, as most of the editorializing contained herein is mine alone.

—Adrien Weibgen, Class of 2014
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HAVE THE RIGHT MINDSET

Before we get into the substance, remind yourself of a few things that will help you have the right perspective on your time at Yale. Reread this section every now and then if you start to feel lost.

1. **Don’t feel bad if you don’t know what people are talking about at first; everyone feels that way.** The point of school is to learn, and if you already knew everything, you wouldn’t need to be here.

2. **Everybody knows stuff, including you.** Maybe you can’t name all the Supreme Court justices, but you did a bunch of stuff before law school, didn’t you? Yes, you did! Many of your experiences will come into play at various points and will give you different and valuable perspectives on what you’re doing here. And even if these experiences don’t help you much at YLS, they will later.

3. **The legal profession values a much greater variety of things than YLS does.** Despite its strong clinical program, YLS disproportionately emphasizes only a few indicators of merit – H’s, moot court performances, publications, clerkships, etc. You may at some point worry that your inability to ace a 24-hour take-home exam means that you’re stupid. You’re not. Even if you aren’t great at taking exams – and this is something you can get better at! – you have skills, interests and experiences that will help you in law school and beyond. Many people who feel totally unremarkable and marginalized at YLS go on to become huge successes in their fields.

4. **You deserve to be here as much (and little!) as anyone else.** Like everyone else, you worked hard to be here – and you got in because of some combination of talent, blind luck, and privilege. There are no students who “clearly deserve” to be here, and no students who “clearly shouldn’t” be here, either – so don’t worry about whether others “deserve” to be here more than you.¹

SET MEANINGFUL GOALS

Law school is a professional school, but there are surprisingly few occasions where you are encouraged to think deeply about what you hope to achieve in your career – much less, your life. But if you don’t take the time to think about what you really want, it’s easy to get sucked into wanting what everybody else seems to want. And if you try to “keep your options open” – all of your options – you may run yourself ragged, spread yourself too thin, and waste your time doing a lot of things you don’t like. Being mindful will help you invest good energy into figuring out and pursuing what is meaningful to you.

Find Your Starting Point

Before you get too deep into the law school mentality, take the time to think about what you really want. You may want to write down answers to the questions below, or to reflect on them with close friends or family.

- **Who are the people I care most about and hope to be able to help through my job?** Myself, my immediate family, people from my community? Folks who are impacted by the criminal justice system, immigrants, women, young people? Think about these questions both in terms of people from your personal life whom you hope to support, and communities / issue areas you hope to get involved with. If you don’t have clear answers yet, that’s fine – the ideas you brainstorm will help you figure out what areas you might want to explore while you’re in school.

• What paid work, projects, or volunteer experiences have I really enjoyed in the past, and why? Which ones didn’t I like, and why? Set aside time to think specifically about each job or project you’ve invested in, and what you liked and disliked about each one. Writing your answers down can help you see patterns and identify what you should look for (and avoid!).

• What type of work do I find the most satisfying? Teamwork or individual work? Developing legal theory or doing things that are more concrete and practical? Working on a big-scale or focusing on local issues? Research and writing, or meeting with people? Fast-paced or long-term?

• What do I hope to be doing in 5 years? In 10? You don’t need to have an exact plan, but law school culture often encourages you to focus only on the years immediately after law school, and not on your career as a whole. If you aren’t reflective, you may find yourself spending a lot of energy getting positions that will only last a year or two, which may or may not advance your long-term career goals.

• How much money do I hope to make in the 5 years after school, and long-term? Take into account your debt, family responsibilities, and imagined future lifestyle. Bear in mind that while firm lawyers easily make upwards of $100,000 in their first year, most public interest positions – even prestigious fellowships – pay less than half that. If you hope to clerk, know that clerkship salaries are based in part on what you made before your clerkship. Because of this, working at a firm for a year or two before clerking, instead of clerking immediately or doing a public interest position first, will up your salary for your clerkship year(s) – and you’ll still be eligible for a clerkship bonus if you then go to a firm.

• Where do I want to live? Are you committed to living in a certain area right after law school, or in the long term? If so, you’ll want to make sure to do your summer jobs there and set other goals that can help you build connections in your target area. You should also think about how committed you are to living in your target area, since you will need to consider a broader range of possible jobs if you must be in a certain place.

• Do I want to have kids? If so, when? Though not having kids is a completely valid life choice, if you do want to have them, or might want to have them, you should take that into account. (Ladies, gentlemen, and gentlequeers, this applies equally to all.) Since you’re just starting your legal career, it’s easy to assume that you have plenty of time and can always switch tracks later, say from working at a firm to doing public interest, or vice versa. But if you hope to take time off to take care of a baby, or want to have money saved up before you have kids, you may not have time to do everything, and you’ll need to prioritize.

Stay On Your Path

Being thoughtful about your goals at the beginning of law school is important, but it won’t be enough. In order to create a meaningful path for yourself, you will have to continue to reflect on your experiences as you go to help you figure out what’s working and what isn’t, whether your goals have changed, and how to make the best use of your remaining time in law school. Being present with yourself is the only way to ensure that your goals are your goals, not someone else’s.

When there are so many people in close proximity pursuing similar things, there can be a strange herd mentality where you start to really want things you actively didn’t want or didn’t know about or give two hoots about just weeks before. Some examples of things you might come to believe you want, but may or may not actually want, include being on the Journal, getting a prestigious clerkship, working for the federal government, building a relationship with a certain fancy professor, becoming a Coker Fellow, and getting a job at a highly-ranked firm. YLS students often call these “gold stars” – things that are attractive, shiny, and hard to attain, but may or may not be a lot of hot air.
When other people start to talk about these “gold stars,” ask yourself:

1. **What exactly is this thing?** Ask people who have done it to describe it to you in detail. How many hours a week does it require? What does the work entail in the average day? What are the best and worst parts of doing this? Etc.

2. **What do I hope to gain out of doing this?**

3. **Is this the only or best way to achieve those goals, or are there other things I should consider?**
   a. For instance, if you’re hoping to be a Coker Fellow to mentor students or because you love to teach, you should also consider applying to be a Dean’s Advisor or a Teaching Fellow at the college.
   b. If your aim is to get to know a professor, working as a research assistant is only one avenue. You can also work on a paper with the professor, allowing you to fulfill a writing requirement, strengthen your research and writing skills, and engage with the professor around your ideas.
   c. Remember that differences that seem huge at YLS – the #12 firm or the #8 firm??! – are often, by anyone else’s standards, marginal or nonexistent. So if you’re deciding between a thing you’d love to do, and a thing that seems only slightly more prestigious, ask yourself if the trade-off in your happiness is worth the abstract advantage one of your options might provide.

4. **Am I going for it for any real reason other than to prove to myself that I can get it?** Many people genuinely enjoy being on the Journal, being a research assistant, etc. If you enjoy these things, go for it! Now’s the time! If you don’t enjoy these things and they aren’t necessary to advance your career goals, remember that, and do not. Go try some things you actually stand to like.

5. **Once I get it, will I enjoy having it?** What are the worst and most difficult elements of this experience, and knowing those things, do I still want it? If it turns out that no one in the outside world understands what this thing is or regards it as prestigious, will I still be glad to have done it?

6. **Would the person who I was when I started law school want this thing? If not, why not?**

7. **Will I enjoy doing this thing now, or am I solely doing it because I think it will be advantageous to me in future?** Though it’s important to be strategic, and being strategic may sometimes require doing things that aren’t the best right now, beware doing too many things you hate for the sole purpose of their possible future advantage. You could spend your whole life doing this.

8. **What does my board of directors think?** If you find yourself getting confused, and you’re not really sure what you want anymore, reach out to people who knew you before law school and whose opinions you really value. Your informal “board of directors” can help you stay true to yourself and navigate difficult choices. They’re the people who’ll say, “Really? That’s what you want? You always talked about wanting to …” Your board will compel you to think about whether you actually want a certain thing that seems really important right now, or whether that thing is an empty “gold star” that doesn’t have meaning to you. Because these people know you well & knew you before law school, they can give you important perspective your friends at law school cannot, especially if they are people you don’t talk to all the time and who therefore have a clearer snapshot of you before you started to go all lawyerly. It’s a good idea to make a physical, handwritten or typed list of 4-5 people you think are good for this purpose and referring to it / reaching out to them when you find yourself facing an important decision and are considering doing something you suspect you wouldn't have thought of doing previously, or you sense that you're otherwise getting lost. Maybe you have changed, and these new things really are important to you now – or maybe not. Your board can help you figure this out.
BE SMART: YOU ARE NOT “OFF THE TREADMILL”

During orientation and at various points thereafter, deans, professors, and other students may tell you that you don’t need to worry at all about grades, your 1L summer job, getting on the Journal, etc. It would be nice if YLS were a magical wonderland where the rules of the world no longer apply, but this is only partly true.

• The people making these statements may have had so much educational or other privilege already that they take it for granted, and they honestly believe you don’t have to worry because they don’t, or didn’t, have to worry. But if you don’t have as solid of a starting point as they do, you do have to worry – or rather, you have to work.

• People who advise you not to worry may not want the same things you want, and again, they confuse their lack of need to worry with your lack of need to worry. For example, a personable, sensible person with one or two H’s on her transcript who wants to work at a great law firm and isn’t unbelievably particular about its rank will almost definitely be able to meet her goal, and does not need to worry too much about grades. Similarly, a student interested in public interest who devotes all of his time to clinic work and rarely attends his academic classes may emphasize that practical experience is worth much more than schoolwork. These people may tell you, “Relax! Don’t worry about grades!” But if you’re hoping to clerk in a competitive district, you do need to worry about grades.

• Every now and then, people are creeps, and they tell you not to worry so you let your guard down, don’t work as hard as them, and fall behind. One infamous example: people who tell you you don’t need to start worrying about the Bluebook exam until 2 weeks before, when they started studying a month ago.

These observations shouldn’t give you a panic attack, but they should underscore the importance of setting meaningful goals, figuring out the things you need to do to achieve those goals, and investing good energy into doing those things.
As the preceding section suggests, people have different goals, and for many, getting great grades is not very important to achieving those goals. If you define being “on the treadmill” as “pursuing a pretty transcript,” many people can comfortably get off the treadmill and end up with wonderfully fulfilling careers. Several early readers of this guide urged me to underscore this idea, pointing to their own experiences as evidence of the different paths students can take at YLS. One student who had several years of great work experience prior to YLS but “didn’t go to one of the Ivy league feeder colleges/high schools/pre-schools/pre-natal yoga studios” wrote:

I didn’t really do any of the “treadmill” kind of things – my grades were bad, I didn’t do the Journal, I didn’t do Moot Court or apply for fancy firms or appellate/e specially prestigious clerkships. But I ended up carving a path for myself that was both really good for me and, in the end, hit some of the marks that people who are on that “treadmill” … would really like [including a federal clerkship] … [and] I have very close relationships with my professors…

Said another student, the recipient of a public interest fellowship:

Outside of clinic, I stepped way off the treadmill and my transcript reflects that. I didn’t have a single relationship with a non-clinical faculty member, and my clinic efforts were due to a passion for the work, not some weird jockeying … and I think it all worked out well. It’s not just people who want to work at firms that can relax a little. People who want to go to into public interest either through fellowships, or directly on the job market off the coasts can also relax. Nobody has asked for my transcript and I suspect I’ll never produce it. My friends who applied to public defense jobs from other schools had similar experiences … [Some of us] just want jobs that pay more than 40k, won’t make us work 60+ hours a week, and allow us to work on things that aren’t evil.

You have to work to get anything you want. For example, you can’t suddenly decide at the beginning of your 3L year that you want to be a public defender right after school if you’ve never done any public defense or criminal justice work at all, and you can’t expect to get a prestigious clerkship if you’ve never cracked a book. But you can (and should!) take a more relaxed approach to YLS if you are still in the process of figuring out what you want, or know that the thing you want does not require stellar grades:

The hyper ambition of YLS is incredibly overwhelming if that is not your narrative. It’s okay to want a “simple” existence and if that is what you want, you can step off the treadmill and do your best to guard against the pressure cooker culture … There were many textbooks that I never opened. I’ve never once briefed a case … There are many, many ways to navigate YLS. Know what you want/ know yourself, do your best to ascertain what your goals require … and then work backwards. I don’t feel for one second that I was harmed (in fact I think I greatly benefited) by not doing the Journal or even attempting the Bluebook exam, not doing all my reading, by not working too hard on any of my academic classes … and by not participating in the clerkship race.

Because the purpose of this guide is to impart information about processes that are especially competitive and secretive, the guide may seem to suggest that you MUST do xyz and do it NOW. But remember that these suggestions only apply if you want the things described here, and want them immediately after law school. Many people have goals that are not “traditional YLS” goals. Some people want those goals someday, but are content with the idea that life is long and there is time after school to continue to develop professionally and to pursue other paths. For example, people who begin their careers in firms frequently undertake pro bono work while there and eventually transition into the public interest world; a fellowship is not the only way to get a public interest job. Similarly, folks who have some interest in clerking but aren’t willing to give up other things they care about in the pursuit of H’s often do something else for one or two years, then apply to clerk; 2L year may be your first shot at getting a clerkship, but it is not your only shot, and many judges value work experience a lot. There is no single right goal or path. Throughout this guide, remember that you are your best guide – not me or anyone else here.
GETTING THE SKINNY

Once you’ve set some goals, how can you figure out what you need to do to get what you want?

• **Read the things.** The Career Development Office, Financial Aid Office, Yale Law Women, and many other groups and offices produce extremely useful guides that tell you lots of stuff about specific topics. To the dismay of the authors of these guides, students often fail to read them, and then have lots of questions that are helpfully and transparently answered in the materials. This shouldn’t deter you from asking a question you fear may already have been answered – I have never once spoken to a YLS administrator or student group leader who gave me guff for failing to know things I could have looked up myself – but you can get in-depth information by reading the guides and emails that address the topics you’re interested in. Just take a gander at this collection of CDO guides²:

² Available at [http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/CDOGuides.htm](http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/CDOGuides.htm).
Or these snazzy brochures (this isn’t even all of them)³:

Official guides and brochures are not substitutes for asking real live human beings, but they are a great start. To stay ahead of the game, take a glance at the resources that are available long before the official application period begins so that you can begin to plan your time here effectively.

- **Go to information sessions.** Again, YLW, CDO and other folks host lots of these. They’re a great place to get your questions answered. But bear in mind that these information sessions may come a bit late in the game and often only include the “official” narrative about how to get things, so seek other sources!

- **Ask around to figure out what it'll take for you to reach your goals.** Once you’ve set specific, true-to-you goals, ask similarly situated people what their experiences have been and what they think it’ll take for you to get what you’re after. If you derive only one lesson from this guide, it should be that people know a lot of things that aren’t written down, so you have to ask questions ALL THE TIME. How often? ALL THE TIME. Even if the guide seems to answer all my questions? YES, TO MAKE SURE THE GUIDE REFLECTS REALITY. Even if there’s an official schedule with clear instructions and timetables for submitting an application? YES BECAUSE WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO ALREADY STARTED AND THE SECRET STUFF NOT LISTED AT ALL OR WRITTEN DOWN ANYWHERE. In my experience, students, alumnae, and even many professors are surprisingly open to answering questions asked by total strangers, but you must work up the courage to ask if there’s anything you should be doing right now to put yourself in a better position to get the thing you want later on.

³ Available at [http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdobrochureshandouts.htm](http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdobrochureshandouts.htm).
• **Email the Wall.** In my experience, emailing the Wall is the best way to get answers to specific questions because it puts your question in front of people of a broad range of experiences and perspectives. Most people will ignore an email sent to a big list, but if you ask something specific, the ones who actually know the answer will very often respond. Though sending an inquiry to a student group you’re a part of or asking friends of friends can also be helpful, doing this may limit your responses to people of similar experiences, and they may have the same questions you do. Casting a wider net can help you link up with people you might not come across or have a chance to talk to otherwise.

• **Know your source.** If someone is offering advice, ask that person follow-up questions to figure out if what they’re saying is helpful to someone with your goals and qualifications, or if that person was a much stronger candidate to begin with and therefore didn’t need to work as hard. If the latter, continue to ask around! If possible, talk both to people who applied and got the thing, and people who applied and didn’t get it. This will give you a more balanced perspective on the process.

• **Talk to people you really trust and who have no incentive to mislead you.** Most people are not rotten snakes in the grass, but some are, and if you’ve only known them for a short time, it’s sometimes hard to tell. People who have already gotten (or not gotten) the thing – whether students who are further along at Yale, or alumnae – are almost always more reliable sources than those you’re in direct competition with, both because they have more experience and because they have no incentive to mislead you. But, remember that those folks might also have started off with more advantages than you, so remember to ask questions that can help you understand what context they’re coming from.

**FIRST SEMESTER**

Not having grades first semester is a blessing, but don’t let it go to waste! The first semester is a good opportunity to lay the foundation for the rest of your time at the law school, and it’s important to:

1) **Find study and note-taking strategies that work for you.** A wise friend suggested that first semester 1Ls should focus on doing 2 classes really well – their small group, and the course of a professor who teaches other stuff the student might be interested in taking later. Staying on top of 4 black-letter courses is basically impossible, and if you try to do it all, you may not develop strong study habits. Prioritizing will give you the space to learn what works for you.

2) **Talk in class – and learn how to listen.** Class participation is an art. Learn it!

3) **Learn to navigate tough conversations, and help create a community of support.** You are going to be with these folks for three years, so it’s in your interest to try to make it work.

4) **Begin to build relationships with professors.** If you’re applying for firm jobs or clerkships, you’ll want to have a couple of professors in your corner by the end of 1L year or by 2L fall, so *start early*. Students who already have relationships with one or two professors by the spring are in a much better position for application processes than students who try to do it all 2L year.

5) **Start to learn how to Bluebook.** It’ll never be fun, but there’s no time like the present.

6) **Get to know 2Ls and 3Ls.** They’ll help you find your way.

7) **Think strategically about the three years you’ll be here.** Whatever your path, you need to plan it.

The sections that follow provide suggestions on how to meet these goals.
NOTE-TAKING AND STUDY STRATEGIES

The first semester is a good time to experiment with different note-taking and study strategies. With the caveat that there is no single best way to take notes and that taking notes in law school is, in fact, quite a lot like taking notes in any other context, here are some things you might try:

1. **Create a reading notes group.** Each day, a different person is responsible for creating typed notes on that day's reading. This is really helpful for the who/what/when/where if you didn't have time to finish all the reading on a given day, and these notes will be a great resource when it comes time for exams (though it's often hard to know what's most important in cases before class, so you'll have to revise your notes to make them usable for exam prep). One way to organize a notes group is to email your class, ask folks to sign up on a Google Doc to join the group, and then add those people to a Dropbox folder where everyone can upload and view notes. Take the initiative to do this—people will thank you!

2. **Make class notes groups.** Similar to the reading notes groups, in a class notes group, someone different is responsible for taking great notes in class each day. Many professors have one person type notes each day, but even if your prof does this, you can still form a notes group and assign one person each day who will be responsible for making sure the typed notes are complete, legible and useful.

3. **Build off of a YLW Outline.** The folks in Yale Law Women are smart as heck and create a ton of resources designed to help students of all genders understand how to navigate YLS. One of the most valuable resources is the YLW Outline Bank, which is available through the Inside site. Magical, glorious outlines are organized by class, professor and date, and since many professors teach the same classes year after year, the outlines often detail everything your professor will cover in the course. These outlines are incredibly useful if you missed a day of class, didn't understand something, or take notes by hand during class but want an editable document to work off of when you're prepping for exams. Instead of starting from scratch, you can use an existing YLW outline as your baseline. Print out the outline and take notes in the margins during class, then make edits after class each day to reflect any necessary changes.

4. **Ask other people what they're doing.** If there's someone in your class who seems really organized and on top of their sh*t, consider asking them what they're doing. It could work for you! Or not! Only one way to find out!

5. **Take notes in the margins of your casebook.** It can be useful to mark things like, “holding,” “parties,” “reasoning” etc. so that if your professor asks what the holding is, you at least know where to look. You can write a 1-sentence or even 2-word description at the top (“cow case”), which can help jog your memory if you don’t have a good memory for the case names. Downside: book notes are rarely helpful when you’re studying for exams.

6. **Write a summary of each case.** Some people do case briefs; others prefer doing a few-sentence summary of each case, which is a similar idea but less onerous.

7. **Make notecards reflecting the rules and holdings in important cases.** This will force you to reflect on what you've learned and figure out what you really need to know about this case. Having these notecards will also help you enormously when you’re studying for exams.

For additional suggestions, check out the excellent **YLW Guide to Study Strategies**, available on the Inside Site.
TALKING IN CLASS

Finding Your Voice

Many people – even those who actively participated in their college courses – find it intimidating to speak up in law school classrooms. There are many reasons for this. Your classmates are smart, and some of them will have greater familiarity with legal terms and concepts than you do. Your professors are smart, too, and they might not always dedicate class time to offering supportive feedback to students who are struggling to understand a certain concept. Even if you’re pretty comfortable talking in a smaller setting, speaking up in a lecture of sixty people is another thing altogether. And students of color and women may suffer from stereotype threat – a unique type of anxiety that can affect people who are worried about confirming negative stereotypes associated with their race, gender, or other group.4

If you’re experiencing some anxiety, that’s perfectly normal – but it’s not a reason not to talk. Why?

There are many good reasons to talk in class.

• **Talking about the law is what you do as a lawyer.** When you work with clients, co-counsel and your colleagues, you’ll have to be prepared and be able to answer their questions as best you can. Answering questions in class is a low-stakes version of this and a good chance to get your feet wet talking about legal concepts.

• **You’re paying a lot to be here. Get a return on your investment!** You’re investing your money, time and energy, to be here. Don’t let it go to waste by sitting back and not participating.

• **Asking questions is the only way to get your questions answered.** Though you can always go up to a professor after class or during office hours – and this can be a great way to build your confidence if you’re not comfortable blurting out a question while 60 pairs of eyes are on you – asking a question in the moment is the best way to stay on track during the lecture. If you missed a key point 15 minutes in and keep your confusion to yourself, you may feel lost after that.

• **If you’re confused by something, you’re probably not alone.** Everyone else may seem to know what’s going on, but if you found something confusing, odds are a few other people did, too. Those people might also feel hesitant about asking for more explanation, and they’ll be grateful to you for taking one for the team.

• **You can bring a new perspective to the conversation.** If you feel out of place in a discussion, chances are you have a different perspective that others might be interested in hearing. Heck, even if they aren’t that interested in hearing it, they may need to hear it and might learn something from you.

• **Your fears about speaking in class are probably a little irrational.** I’m not saying this to be judgmental – I, too, have irrational fears about speaking in class. Sometimes my voice gets shaky, I’m not entirely sure what I want to say before I start talking, and when I’m done, I imagine that everyone must think I’m an idiot. But if I take a moment to reflect, I realize this response is irrational. People probably wouldn’t conclude I was an idiot based on one nonsensical comment – and anyone who did that is probably kind of a jerk whom I shouldn’t let interfere with my learning process.

4 For more information about gender and class participation, see the 2012 YLW Speak Up Study, available on the Inside site.
TALKING IN CLASS (cont’d)

You can learn to be more comfortable participating. Like essentially everything, speaking in class may come more easily to some, but is something that can be learned.

• **Do the reading.** I mean, duh. If you didn’t do the reading, you’re not going to feel like you can answer questions intelligently. Even if you did do the reading, you may still not be able to answer the questions – this is completely normal given the difficulty of the material you’ll be studying – but at least you’ll be able to follow some of what’s being discussed.

• **Take some reading notes.** They don’t have to be fancy, but jotting down a few lines can help jog your memory if you get put on the spot.

• **Know something well.** If you aren’t able to fully digest all of the reading, focus on the parts you found most interesting and learn those issues well. Then make sure to raise your hand when those parts are discussed. This will help you build confidence, and maybe next time, you’ll feel more comfortable trying to answer questions that seem a little more challenging.

• **Ask questions.** If you were confused by something, were curious about what the broader implications of a ruling are, or want to have a better understanding of how one case fits in with others you’ve studied, **ask.** If you aren’t comfortable winging it in class, write your questions out in advance. Asking questions will help you feel more comfortable engaging in a dialogue, and may keep you from being cold-called!

• **Write down what’s making you anxious so you can spot – and break – bad thought patterns.** Jotting down notes about your anxiety may help you recognize patterns of thinking that don’t make sense, such as mindreading (“everyone thinks…”), hyperbolic thinking (“I’m the dumbest person in this class”), and non-precision (“I’m the worst – at, like, everything”). Overcome these anxieties by focusing on what the realistic consequences of screwing up might be. For example, if you feel embarrassed because you believe your classmates think you’re dumb for giving a wrong answer, ask yourself: would I conclude that someone else was an idiot for giving one wrong answer? Even if one or two of my classmates do think less of me for giving a wrong answer, does their opinion matter so much that I should just stop trying? If I give a dumb answer – will I die? Encourage yourself to remember that everyone – yes, even that genius who seems to get everything right – makes mistakes, and it’s unlikely that your classmates’ (or professors’) opinions about your intelligence will irrevocably harden as a result of one wrong answer.

• **Remind yourself that learning is a process.** If you could answer every question perfectly, you wouldn’t need to be in class at all. The entire point of being in school is to learn, so remember that you are learning to think and talk like a lawyer and will get better at it the more you do it.

• **Find strength in numbers.** Meet with a few of your classmates before class to discuss some of the questions or concerns you would like to raise in class. Talk about your ideas with a group, and collectively commit to bringing up certain points during class. This will help you build confidence in the material and have a sense of agency over how the class discussion unfolds.

• **Remember that stereotypes are just that.** Though stereotype threat may make you nervous about your performance, remind yourself that your anxiety exists because the stereotype exists – not because you actually aren’t able to perform. It’s natural to feel nervous, but you can do it!

• **Just do it.** Exposing yourself to what makes you anxious helps you get over your anxiety, and speaking more in class will eventually make you feel more comfortable speaking in class. Don’t just wait till you get
TALKING IN CLASS (cont’d)

called on. Make a concrete plan to engage and increase your level of participation, and set a deadlines by which you’ll do it. For example:

- Email your professor with a question, and then go to office hours to discuss it.
- Raise your hand in class to ask a question (or make a comment) you prepared ahead of time.
- Jot down the answer to the question in class before you hear the answer.
- Volunteer to answer an easy question early on.

Building A Conversation Together: Suggestions for Confident Speakers

If you’ve always been comfortable speaking in class and still are, suggestions about how to improve your confidence may not apply to you. But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t think about how best to contribute to classroom discussions. Where some people need to build skills to feel comfortable speaking publicly, others stand to gain a lot from learning to be better listeners and encouraging their peers to share different perspectives. Active listening and drawing on everyone’s strengths are skills that will serve you well not only in law school, but in your future career.

It’s understandable that some people contribute more in class than others. Long pauses in class can be awkward, and if you know the answer, you may feel like you have to break the silence. You may also reason that anybody could answer the question, and if others decide not to, that’s their choice. And, you may feel that it’s the professor’s responsibility – not yours – to manage classroom discussions.

But there are a lot of factors that enable some people to be more comfortable participating than others and that cause otherwise confident, extremely intelligent people to hold back. If you find it easy to talk to professors and participate in class, you can be a good friend to your peers by helping them find their voices. And you stand to gain a lot, too – consider what you’re missing if more than half of the class never speaks at all.

While professors are in the best position to manage classroom dynamics and encourage participation by all, they may not always make it a priority, and there is a lot that students can do, too:

1. **Pay attention.** Pick one class, and pay attention to who participates over the course of a few weeks. Who is talking a lot? Who isn’t speaking? Pay attention to your own participation, too. How many people are in your class? Are you taking up your “fair share” of the time?

2. **Challenge yourself to listen.** If you have already talked in a class, try holding back and opening the floor up for someone new to step in instead. There may be an awkward silence, but if you leave space for someone new to break it, you may learn a lot more than you would have from speaking again.

3. **Be affirming.** When someone makes a comment in class who hasn’t spoken much before, go up to them after or email them to say you appreciated their contribution.

4. **Talk to your professor about encouraging more participation from a greater variety of students.** Professors don’t always realize it when a small handful of students consistently dominates the conversation, so if you’d like to hear from more people, go to your professor’s office hours to talk about it. Be positive about the class, explain that you feel you would learn even more if more people participated, and suggest a few strategies that might ensure more participation (ex. working off of a list of names to cold-call, asking that only people who have yet to speak volunteer, etc.). This can work. I once approached a professor whose class was dominated by the same 3 or 4 people every time, and even though he was initially reluctant to adopt a system that would “put people on the spot,” he ultimately agreed that it was better to have more people participating and decided to implement casual cold-calling. The fact that he openly addressed the issue to the class also seemed to help people step up/step back.
Navigating Difficult Conversations

Legal inevitably raises issues that bear on students’ personal experiences – sometimes extremely difficult ones. For example, first-year Contracts students may be asked to consider the morality of voluntary contracts that exploit poor people’s economic instability. Constitutional law courses discuss weighty subjects such as abortion and racism. Evidence courses routinely examine cases of abuse, violence, and murder. And nearly every Criminal Law course involves the difficult – and for many, triggering – topic of rape.

Students’ backgrounds and personal experiences inevitably affect the way they discuss and approach legal issues, and as difficult as it may be to talk about serious issues among friends, it may feel impossible in a room full of strangers, many of whom will have no connection to the issue. Many cases address hard topics, but are used solely for the purpose of illustrating legal concepts, which may make students with a personal investment in the issue feel silenced. Professors may state that they don’t have time to get into the difficult non-legal issues the case raises, or may fail to acknowledge that the case raises difficult issues at all. And peers and professors may urge students who are deeply impacted by an issue to try to adopt a “neutral” perspective.

The point of these observations is twofold. First, if you have felt silenced or sad, troubled by the careless manner in which your peers discuss issues of deepest importance to you, upset by a professor’s willingness to gloss over the incredible suffering some cases address – you aren’t alone. This happens to almost everyone, and if you’re lucky, you will eventually find peers you can discuss these matters with, even if it doesn’t happen in your first semester. Second, while it is impossible to avoid the difficult issues your legal coursework will raise, you can help create a more supportive community for yourself and fellow students.

1. **Recognize that a surprising number of legal issues can strike close to home.** Though your perspective on an issue may be purely theoretical or academic, that may not be true of all of your peers. Keep in mind that you don’t know the experiences of everyone in the room, and topics such as sexual violence, racism, or poverty may directly impact people around you. If you knew for certain that someone in the room had personal experience with the issue – which is likely the case – what would you say about it?

2. **Walk in someone else’s shoes.** When someone makes a comment, try to imagine where it’s coming from. What perspective do you think this person is bringing to the issue? Are they speaking from personal experience? Imagine that you were a member of the group most impacted by this conversation. Would that change your perspective? How if so?

3. **Be vocal.** If you aren’t the person most impacted by the conversation, but empathize with whoever is, consider speaking up about the issue. This helps take the burden off of others, especially when people may feel reluctant to become a “token” for speaking up about their own experiences. (Just make sure you aren’t speaking “for” anyone.) Making a comment during class – even if it’s just to voice agreement – can help make people feel supported. Emailing or meeting with a professor to discuss potential ways to approach a tough topic may also help forestall future difficulties.

4. **Reach out.** If it seems like someone is having a hard time with a certain issue, go up to them and say you noticed and ask if there’s anything they might want to talk about. Though they may well turn you down, there is a good chance they’ll appreciate the offer, as it may help them feel less isolated.

5. **Give people a chance to learn.** A lot of times, when people say things that are offensive or insensitive, they don’t have any intention to harm and are speaking from a place of ignorance. Instead of writing someone off right away, consider going up to them and letting them know the impact their statement had on you, or on others – allies are in a good position to broach difficult one-on-one conversations since they are not as affected by the topic. The person may learn something from the conversation and change their behavior, and you may feel better that at least the issue is out in the open.
BUILD YOUR NETWORK

One of the most important things you can do your first year is to build connections with 2Ls and 3Ls. Why is this so significant? As this guide should make clear, much of what you need to know to secure opportunities at Yale and beyond is not written down. Because of this, relationships with 2Ls and 3Ls are extremely valuable. They can provide answers to basic questions about fields you may know nothing about. They can send you copies of their successful cover letters, which can give you a sense of what a certain employers are looking for. They can tell you nitty gritty details about application processes, steer you away from professors who are difficult to work with, and point you toward hidden treasures on the faculty. They can connect you to friends of theirs who have done what you’re trying to do. In short, they can be your mentors.

In my experience, people who are slightly further along in their law school careers are very willing to share what they know, because they just went through it and are eager to impart all of the things they wish they’d known when they started. So how can you find upper-class mentors?

1. **Your Cokers and Deans Advisors.** They should always be your immediate go-to’s. Their job is to help you. Let them do it!

2. **Affinity groups.** Nearly every affinity group has a “buddy” system. Ask your buddy for advice! If you didn’t ask for one at the beginning of the semester, it’s probably not too late! You should also attend affinity group meetings to get to know people, and email your affinity group list with any questions.

3. **Secondary journals.** Secondary journals are a great place to meet people with similar interests early in your law school career.

4. **1L job chats.** One friend made it a point to go to as many of these as possible because she wanted to get a sense of what many different jobs entail and to make connections with as many people as possible. She reasons that at the beginning, you never know who might end up being a really good person for you to know, and she notes that 1L job chats are a particularly accessible way for students who are “outsiders” to get to know people with broader networks and connections.

5. **Clinics.** Clinics are a fantastic way to meet students with similar passions. And since clinics attract both students who plan to commit to public interest for their entire careers, and students who plan to clerk, work at firms, or do other jobs in addition to or instead of doing public interest work, the friends you make in your clinic might be able to help you in all sorts of ways.

6. **Conferences.** Student groups and others organizing conferences are always looking for 1L volunteers. Working on a conference can help connect you to like-minded people.

7. **Student groups.** ACS, FedSoc, and Yale Law Women can all provide very strong networks for students who actively participate, and particularly those who serve on the board. These groups can also help students form very useful professional contacts since visiting judges, professors, etc. frequently want to meet with representatives from these groups and/or the Yale Law Journal (and often, it seems, only representatives from these groups).
JOURNALS AND BLUEBOOKING

Yale Law School publishes nine academic journals – the Yale Law Journal (YLJ), and eight specialized journals. There is significant disagreement about whether doing a journal, or the Journal, is necessary to advance one’s career. For instance, YLW’s Student Guide maintains that:

Membership on a law review is said to be a mark of prestige within one’s school and is likely to be viewed positively by employers, especially judges if you are seeking a clerkship. Yet membership on the Yale Law Journal does not really carry the same weight as being on law review at other schools … Because of our small class size and the qualifications of all YLS students … [s]tudents who are not on the Journal obtain excellent clerkships and jobs with prestigious law firms. You should not join the Journal just because you want a certain job.

Many students would echo these sentiments and point to the numerous opportunities for leadership that Yale provides. Some public interest students would also argue that the Journal is completely irrelevant to their career goals and, for them, a waste of time.

My own view is that you should try to get on the Journal if you want to clerk, and do a journal regardless. Here is my reasoning:

1. **Everyone must learn to Bluebook, and trying out for a journal will force you to learn.** Bluebooking basically means making sure that the citations in a legal document are accurate and properly formatted. Is the full name of the case properly abbreviated? Should this comma be in italics or not?? Does this sound horrendously boring? It is! Yet everyone must learn to do it, and there is no better time to do it than your first year. Take it from me – I have made it to year three still having no clue how to Bluebook, and quite frankly, it’s an embarrassment. I was told by one professor, in the most loving way possible, that I had “the worst Bluebooking that [he had] seen in a decade.” I have been forced to turn in memos to public interest employers that looked unpolished because the citations were completely improper. Learning to Bluebook is very boring, and you may never want to do it, but there is never a better time to do it than now, during the earliest portion of your law career. Trying out for the Journal will give you a specific deadline by which you will have to learn the basics of Bluebooking. You may hate it today, but tomorrow, you’ll be glad that you know the main rules and don’t have to spend hours stressing about how to fix all of the citations at the last possible moment (like I do!). For tips on how to study for the Bluebook exam, see Appendix B.

2. **Being on a journal will help you get over your fear of “legal scholarship.”** Many students with no legal background feel daunted by the idea of analyzing “legal scholarship” – I certainly did. But in its plainest terms, legal articles are just essays putting forth ideas, and if you’ve ever read an essay putting forth ideas – and by golly, I bet you have – you have the skills you need to engage with legal scholarship. Joining a journal will give you a chance to read articles, gain familiarity with legal terms and concepts, and realize that some articles are very good while others, even some written by fancy people, are no good at all. Coming to understand this may help you feel more confident expressing your own ideas.

3. **Being on a journal looks nice on the ol’ resume, which is a good return for a modest time investment.** I am now a “Senior Editor” of the Yale Law and Policy Review. Doesn’t that sound fancy?? All I had to do to earn this moniker was to give 1-2 evenings to YLPR for two semesters and boom, senior status. In the process, I earned ungraded credits, gained practice learning how to find rules in the Bluebook (which, for others, could translate into knowing the rules), got to read some cool stuff, hung out with nice people, and ate pizza and Thai food. Had I wanted to, I could also have taken on more responsibilities and helped out with the more substantive aspects of the journal, which is, for many, surprisingly fun.
4. **Even being on THE JOURNAL is not as time-consuming as you might fear.** As a first-year editor, you will have one regular night a week when you may have a sourcecite, which is a session where you check the sources for a piece to be published and review Bluebook citations. Between sourcecites and other responsibilities, the average time commitment for first year editors is 5-10 hours a week. For your 3L year, you decide how much you want to stay involved in the Journal; the options run the gamut from doing nothing at all to making it your full-time job. Admittedly, one night a week is more than I want to spend doing sourcecites, and students with other serious time commitments may feel the same way. But for most of us, 5-10 hours per week really isn’t a lot. What would you be missing in those few hours – watching some TV on the internets? Going to Bar Review? Chillaxing on your couch?

5. **Being on the Journal – or in a senior leadership position of a secondary journal – is prestigious, and it will help you get other prestigious things.** Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that being on the Journal, or a leader of a secondary journal, helps with applications for prestigious things, and may help substantially. Again, getting an edge over other YLS applicants seeking to clerk with an especially coveted federal judge may not be reason enough for you to invest a substantial amount of time in a journal. But if you do want such a clerkship, or **might well** want one, giving a lot to a journal is probably worth the investment.

YLJ is the only journal that has an entrance exam, which consists of a Bluebooking exam and a writing component; all of the other journals are completely open to all. If you want to avoid the YLJ selection process but do want journal experience, consider joining a secondary journal. These journals are great places to meet like-minded students and engage with focused scholarship that will be of interest to you. Secondary journals also seem to have more accessible paths to positions of leadership, which are generally available to anyone who has put in a lot of work and taken on increasing levels of responsibility.²

**A Note on Diversity Issues**

As a longtime racial justice advocate, I feel that this section would be incomplete without some discussion of the diversity issues that have plagued the Yale Law Journal in recent years. YLJ suffers from a lack of diversity in both its membership and leadership, and although this varies from year to year – half of the members of last year’s editorial board were women of color – as of this writing, the top six positions of YLJ are held by white men. The 3L class of editors includes no Latino/a students, and despite extensive outreach by YLJ to the various affinity groups in advance of this spring’s Bluebook exam, this year’s entering class of more than fifty editors includes only one black student and one Latino student.

There are a number of possible explanations for this, but I think it is safe to say that the problem is not that students of color generally don’t feel like trying out for the Journal – many do try out – or that women don’t feel like leading it. I have concluded that something in the selection process produces these outcomes. While the selection process is facially race-neutral and I don’t believe that members of YLJ are intentionally discriminatory, consistent disparate impact suggests to me that there is a flaw in the process. (Perhaps needless to say, I reject out of hand any suggestion that POC and women simply can’t learn the Bluebook rules as well or are worse writers.) Though members of YLJ are committed to addressing diversity issues and have invited suggestions about how to correct this problem, it remains a major issue, and I believe it will remain one until YLJ dramatically reforms rather than tweaks its selection process, not only its outreach.

If you are a person of color and/or woman who is considering trying out for the Journal, I hope this real talk will not discourage you from trying. If it’s something you think you would enjoy or would find useful to your career goals, you should try. But you should also know that you will need to work incredibly hard to get it, and even then, you may not succeed. If you don’t, you should know that you’re in the good company of the many other brilliant people who have also failed and gone on to do other great things.

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² For specific information on membership and leadership of secondary journals by gender, please see Appendix E of the 2012 YLW Speak Up Study, available on the Inside Site.
PROFESSORS

No matter what your career path, you will need to develop relationships with at least a few professors. Professors can help you improve your writing, advise you on possible career paths, provide connections in your field, and – perhaps most important of all – write letters of recommendation for you. Aim to have three professors who are ready to write you recommendations by the end of your second year at latest. People hoping to clerk should aim for having three recommenders as soon as possible, and by the end of 2L fall semester at latest. (The clerkship timeline changes constantly and will differ for different students, so please see the “Clerkships” section for more information.) Getting two or three recommenders may sound easy to do, but since large lecture courses rarely result in recommenders, you'll have to be mindful to meet this goal.

Developing Relationships

• Go to office hours early and often.
  o Remember - professors are paid to teach you, so don't feel bad about taking up their time. That's what it's there for.
  o If you feel nervous about going to office hours, try going to the office hours of a visiting professor who is teaching one of your 1L fall classes. You'll never see them after first semester, and you, like everyone else, are guaranteed to receive credit for the course!
  o Don't expect greatness. Maybe you and the professor will really hit it off; maybe it will be horrendously awkward. Either way, you'll survive.
  o Prepare, but don't over-prepare. You need to have something to say when you get there, but it doesn't need to be something brilliant. You can ask a follow-up question you didn't have time to get to in class, ask the professor if s/he has any recommendations for further reading on a particular subject, or come with a question about a paper you're thinking of writing for the class. You don't need to have read the professor's articles; you just want to start a conversation.

• Take seminar courses, clinics, and other low-enrollment courses.
  o It is almost impossible to get to know a professor in a large lecture course. In a seminar or clinic, it's almost impossible not to get to know your professor.
  o Make sure to look for low-enrollment courses during Add/Drop – not just courses that are officially listed as “seminars.” I have been in many “open enrollment” classes that had 15 or fewer students, but this entire category of classes is often overlooked by people seeking small courses.

• Write papers early and often.
  o Paper-writing is not just for future academics - it's your chance to improve your legal writing and get to know a professor better.
  o The earlier you start writing papers, the more opportunities you'll have to develop your writing, and the more potential recommenders you'll have.
  o Clinics are a great place to write, too! You'll get to work on real cases, help real people, work with wonderful classmates and – bonus! – also sharpen your writing skills.
• Do what you love.
  o When you do something you’re passionate about, you’re much more likely to work harder and be better at it than if you’re trudging along abstractly trying to impress someone. Follow what you love, whether it’s working in clinics or exploring political theory. Your enthusiasm will make you shine!

• Be chummy.
  o Is it calculated? Brown-nosing? Perhaps. But treating professors like human beings whom you like, and whose work you respect, goes a long way. Hopefully you genuinely do like and respect your professors (particularly if you’ve chosen to do things that you love, as urged above). But even if you don’t love a certain professor, doing as if is good practice for your professional life, where you will need to create positive relationships with basically everyone regardless of your personal feelings.
  o Go to office hours more than you absolutely need to. Maintaining relationships instead of emailing for the occasional reference can mean the difference between someone who will write you a pretty nice letter, and someone who has an investment in and will really go to bat for you.
  o Ask for professors’ help and thank them profusely for providing it. (This is also just good manners.)

• Work with the professor. Some ways of doing this are described below.

• Not everyone can be your friend – but no one should be your enemy!
  o You should strive to cultivate positive professional relationships with most or all of your professors, but you aren’t going to be everyone’s BFF. If you and a certain professor just do not get along, it probably doesn’t make sense to belabor the point. Invest your energy in developing better relationships with other profs. But whatever happens, part on the best terms possible. YLS is a small place!

Finding Professors to Work With

Though professors are encouraged to post available positions publicly, many do not. If there is a professor you might be interested in working with, the only surefire way to know if that person is looking for RAs, TAs, or Coker Fellows, or is willing to supervise independent research, is to ask. You can email the professor directly, stop by office hours, or email his/her assistant.

A professor’s interests/traits may not give you an accurate impression of what your working relationship with the person might be like. For instance, students sometimes assume that if a professor is interested in social justice issues, that person will feel invested in developing positive, egalitarian working relationships with students. People may imagine that professors who are interested in race issues will be interested in becoming mentors to students of color, or that female professors will be less likely to favor male students. Conversely, people may imagine that professors coming from a law and economics perspective are per se less personable than public interest minded professors, or that male professors will be unapproachable to most women. These assumptions could be true, but they could be wildly wrong. Don’t assume – ask!

The only reliable way to get an impression of what it will be like to work with a certain professor is to ask multiple people. If you don’t know anyone who has worked with the person, email the Wall. Before committing to work with a professor, you should get a good sense of what the professor’s expectations are and what the experience is likely to be like. This will help you figure out whether the relationship will be a good fit. Email the Wall to get feedback, and read the professor’s course reviews to get a better sense of his/her personality from a wider range of students.
Ways to Work With Professors

• Clinics
  o Clinics are a fantastic way for public interest-minded students to get to know professors.
  o Clinics offer very substantive interactions with professors because you’re working with them all the time, both in your seminar and on cases. You are unlikely to get this level of attention and feedback on your work anywhere else in the law school, even in seminars, as most require only one paper.

• Research Assistant
  o Serving as an RA can be a great way to get to know a professor and spend some time researching a topic in depth. That said, it’s not for everyone. For the most part, you’ll be investigating the professor’s ideas - not your own - which some can find frustrating.
  o RA positions vary a great deal. Some are very substantive; others involve checking citations. Some require a huge time commitment over the course of a semester or year; others can be done in a few weeks. Make sure to ask the professor for details about what the work will entail before signing on, and reach out to current or past RAs for their feedback!
  o Think carefully about what you’re hoping to get out of RA’ing, and what level of effort is required to meet your goals. For instance, if you are a 1L and need a recommender for clerkship applications next year, working as a semester-long RA may be a smart move.

• Teaching Assistant
  o You might prefer being a TA if you want some interaction with students.
  o Finding a TA position may take some legwork, since there are far fewer TA than RA positions.

• Supervised Research / Writing a Paper
  o You can write a paper with a professor in a class, or arrange to conduct supervised research (meaning you’ll work independently and check in with your professor, but won’t have scheduled class hours).
  o Professors can award up to three supervised research credits for papers, though if you write the paper for a class, the professor may award fewer or no additional credits. Before you commit to writing a paper, make sure to ask what the professor’s credit policy is!
  o People often feel shy about asking professors to supervise papers. Don’t. At worst, they’ll say no. Last semester I went to the office hours of a professor I’d never met before, described my research topic to him, and walked out of that same meeting with an agreement that he would award me three supervised research credits and SAW credit for my project. Though you may have to try more than once, you can forge a relationship if you do your homework beforehand and approach someone whose work you really connect to.
  o Some students feel that writing a paper is a smarter way to get to know a professor than RA’ing because it allows you to build a relationship while developing your own work, not someone else’s. A paper that you write can be published under your name, whereas work you do for others will remain largely anonymous. However, RA’ing can be an important way to get to know professors who can serve as references for clerkship, academic and other positions, so you may want to try both.
**PROFESSORS (cont’d)**

- **Coker Fellow**
  
  o Serving as a Coker Fellow can be a great way to deepen a relationship with a professor while helping 1L students strengthen their writing.
  
  o Because of the nature of the position, Cokering is especially helpful to those who may want to pursue an academic career.
  
  o Most professors hire Coker Fellows from their past small groups, or people who have worked as their research assistants. Staying in close contact with your small group professor is key, and working as an RA for a professor who often teaches small groups may be another way to get your foot in the door. This can be a good way to hedge your bets since your 1L small group professor might not be leading a small group your 3L year.
  
  o Although there is an official, centralized application process during 2L spring, many (if not most) professors choose their Cokers much earlier. If there is a professor you would be interested in Cokering for, reach out at the beginning of your 2L spring (or earlier!) to ask if that professor knows if s/he will be teaching a small group the following year, and to express your interest in Cokering for him/her. **Do not wait for the official application period to reach out, since many positions will already be filled.**
  
  o Professors usually want Cokers with very strong transcripts, so if your transcript is peppered with P’s, work extra hard to reach out to professors and make a strong case for yourself.
  
  o Each year, about half of the students who apply to be Cokers receive positions.
  
  o Cokering is extremely rewarding, but also very time-consuming, and it doesn’t pay that well for the amount of work involved ($3,500 for the semester). If what you’re after is mentorship experience and decent pay, you could also apply to be a Dean’s Advisor or Teaching Fellow.

**Another Note on Diversity**

Black and Latino/a students have often been underrepresented among Cokers. For instance, this year, there is not a single black or Latino/a Coker Fellow. I believe this is so because:

1. Students of color are generally less plugged into the fact that the selection process begins long before the official selection process begins.
2. Such students often have more difficulty developing close relationships with professors.
3. There is no centralized process to promote diversity within the pool of Cokers, and
4. Too few professors meaningfully prioritize diversity in selecting Cokers.

Though students can do little to change the selection process, I am optimistic that students of color who understand the process and are proactive about developing relationships with professors early on will have a good shot at becoming Cokers.
GETTING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Plan ahead.** If you are planning on applying for clerkships, you will need up to three letters of recommendation by the end of 2L fall or sooner. If you're gunning for public interest fellowships, you will want to have a clinic professor in your corner as early as possible. Don't put off figuring out potential recommenders, since you may need to choose courses to ensure that you get to know professors.

- **Understand what your professor's requirements and practices are as early as possible.** Some professors will only write letters of recommendation for students who have worked as their RA or have written a paper for them. Some are willing to be called for a reference, but won't write letters (or vice versa). Some will write letters only for the students they regard as their best RAs – not everyone who has worked for them. Some will agree to write letters for lots of people, but only write good letters for their favorites (a practice I think is pretty immoral but am told is somewhat common). Letters also run the gamut from a two-line note that says “this person is great, he got an H” to lengthy and heartfelt testimonials that emphasize how brilliant and wonderful a student is. The only way to know what a professor's requirements are and what a letter is likely to be like is to ask the professor and ask around. If you are considering taking a seminar, working as an RA, or asking to write a paper with a professor partly in hopes of getting a letter later, ask around before you commit to working with the person.

- **Be frank.** When you are asking for a letter of recommendation or a reference, it's best to do so in person or by phone, not via email. This will allow you to gauge your professor’s response. Does the professor give you an enthusiastic, whole-hearted yes? Did you get a semi-reluctant, “Okay, I guess I could do that”? If the latter, steer clear. If you aren't completely confident, be direct, and give the professor an out so s/he has the option of turning you down gracefully. For example: “I’m applying for x and I was wondering if you might be willing to write me a letter of recommendation. The process is incredibly competitive, so I need recommenders who will be completely enthusiastic about me. I understand if you only write letters for students who have written with/RA’d for you/taken more than one course with you, and if you don't feel comfortable serving as a reference for me for any reason, please let me know.”

- **Provide context for the recommendation.** Once a professor has agreed to serve as a reference, give them some information about you and what you're applying for. Offer to send them your resume, transcript, a description of the program and a draft application.

- **Talk to the professor about what the recommendation should say.** What are you hoping the professor will emphasize? What is most relevant to the position you're applying for? Ask if you can read the letter of recommendation before submission (though most professors won't allow this).

- **Be strategic.** Depending on your needs, some letters of recommendation are worth more than others.
  - If you're going for a public interest fellowship, having a clinic professor as a reference – preferably one who leads a clinic relevant to your fellowship topic – is ideal. If possible, you should also take academic courses that relate to the type of work you might do in future.
  - For the Liman fellowship, taking the Liman workshop, doing a Liman project, or working with Judith Resnik or Hope Metcalf, the Director of the program, is helpful. Professor Resnik plays a very active role in selecting the fellows.
  - If you're going after an especially prestigious clerkship, a small handful of professors (Eskridge, Chua, Gerken, Resnik, Amar, etc.) wield a disproportionate amount of influence among high-profile judges, so try to build relationships with them early on. But be aware that working for these professors does not guarantee you a strong recommendation, and *many* students get great clerkships with recommendations from other faculty members, so again, make sure to ask around to determine what each professor’s practices are. And remember, *any professor who is enthusiastic about you and will call judges’ chambers on your behalf is invaluable!*
TAKING EXAMS

In many courses, your entire grade will be based on a single exam. If you find this idea scary, you’re not alone! But doing well on exams doesn’t require having a photographic memory. The strategies below can help you find your way, and I also recommend the YLW Guide to Study Strategies, available on the Inside Site.

Resources

1. **Hornbooks.** A hornbook is basically like Cliff's Notes for the law. Instead of including details about a lot of cases, they provide much more streamlined explanations of the rules and examples of how they're applied. Though these are probably most useful at the end of the semester when you're studying for exams, they can also help you understand the overall structure of a topic/course, so you may find it useful to get them at the beginning since many professors address topics in a non-linear fashion in class. I personally like Glannon's Examples and Explanations, but ask the librarians to show you other kinds before you buy any. Please buy used versions of these since most people only use them once ever & they'll be cheap & pristine!

2. **Past exams.** Past exams for all previous courses are available on the law library’s website.

Strategy

**Throughout the Semester**

- Do the reading. Take notes.
- Reread your notes as you go to make sure you understand how the pieces fit together.
- Pay attention to what the professor thinks is important, and what points are emphasized over and over. You'll definitely need to know those issues cold for the exam!
- Make flashcards as you go for cases that stand for certain important principles.

**Weeks 1-3**
Check out YLW’s amazing Outline Bank, available on the Inside Site. Order a hornbook and skim the table of contents so you can get a sense of how the topic is organized.

**Week 5**
Check out a past exam from your professor. *What, already?!* Yes. This will give you a sense of the sort of information the professor will be looking for on the final exam, which will help you figure out how to streamline your reading and studying. For instance, some professors insist that you know the name and year of the case; others don't care. Some will spend a lot of class time talking about the details of cases, but will ultimately only want you to be able to cite to the relevant rule, provision of the code, etc. Figuring this out sooner rather than later will spare you a lot of trouble later on. You

**Midway Through the Semester**
Make an outline of all of your notes to date. *Oh why?* It'll help you get a grip on all of the information you've learned so far, and give you a more solid foundation for the weeks ahead. It will also spare you the headache of making the entire outline at the end of the semester.

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6 Search for past exams at [http://morris.law.yale.edu/search~S2/a](http://morris.law.yale.edu/search~S2/a).
Exam Period

The suggestions below (and the accompanying attack outline excerpted in Appendix A) were provided by a YLS grad with near-perfect grades. While they won’t work for everyone and involve way more effort than you might be willing to put in, this approach is a good example of the importance of developing study strategies that really work for you (and the need to devote a LOT of time to studying if what you’re aiming for is great grades).

If possible, it’s best to allocate 5 full days to study for each exam. Studying and practicing extensively will help you go more quickly during the exam, when every minute counts.

1. **Go over everything.** 3-3.5 days.
   - Make a new document and go through the course chronologically. You can use the course syllabus as the structure of your outline or start with a blank document, but start from scratch and don’t rely on someone else’s outline. You’ll need to do it yourself to really learn!
   - Write out all of the important points from your class notes, going lecture by lecture with your casebook next to you for reference.
   - Focus on the doctrinal tests. What are the “magic words”? If x is true, what gets triggered? (For example, strict scrutiny applies when… Scrutiny isn’t strict when…)
   - Reread any cases that are unclear.
   - Create separate pages for THEMES and QUESTIONS, and jot down notes on these pages as you go along. This will help you see the big picture of the course and areas you need to focus on.

2. **Take a practice exam.** 0.5 days. You might do horribly on the practice exam, but you will want to do it because it will help you think about how to organize your attack outline. You can either take a practice exam that has a model answer, or correct an exam with other people. If possible, go to your professor’s office hours to discuss your answers.

3. **Meet with other people to talk through your questions.** 0.5 days. Discussing an exam with other people is especially helpful for policy questions.

4. **Review past exams.** Many profs reuse questions from year to year, so take a look!
   - Cataloging model exam answers (“fall 2012 had questions on A, B and C; spring 2014 had questions on X, Y and Z”) can help you identify issues that are likely to arise.
   - Look at the questions/issues that have high point values. Where are people getting the most points from?
   - Take practice exams, and go to office hours to discuss your answers with your professor.

5. **Create an attack outline.** Do this 1-2 days before the exam.
   - Make sure to set a limit for yourself (8 pages is a good goal). That way, you won’t be overwhelmed with information.
   - The attack outline should be a reorganization of all of the material you’ve gone over.
   - Organize the attack outline as a decision tree or set of questions you need to ask yourself when you look at a fact pattern. That way, you can think through the facts methodically and won’t miss important issues. (For an example, see Appendix A.)

6. **Take another practice exam the day before the exam.**

7. **Skim your attack outline immediately before the exam.** Leave yourself an hour to do this.
Taking the Exam

The content below is based on a conversation with a YLS professor, who shed some light on what professors look for in exam answers. Though grading is ultimately somewhat idiosyncratic, these tips are likely to be useful in any exam course.

When looking through a huge stack of exams, professors look for key phrases and concepts that indicate that you understand the material. Using "magic words" and a clear structure can help you score points because this will help the professor quickly recognize that you have a strong grasp of the issues. Use lots of headings (phrases or sentences), make sure the first sentence of every paragraph speaks to the issues, and underline case names and claims.

Structuring Your Response:

1. **State the main issue.** "The key question is…"
2. **Identify the test.** "The test for determining whether … is …"
   a. "Facts that trigger…"
   b. "Case A says x, but if it’s … Case B says y …"
3. **Apply the test to these facts.** "The facts here suggest…"
   a. Choose the facts that matter.
      • You can also signal the red herrings. "You might think this fact matters, but it doesn’t because…”
   b. Draw comparisons between these facts and others. "As in Case A, the defendant here…” or "Unlike in Case B, the defendant …”
   c. Evaluate: is this a stronger or weaker case than Case A? Identify the strongest and weakest facts.
4. **Conclusion.** "This is a close / easy / hard case … Ultimately, it seems that …”

General Tips:

• Throughout the exam, remember to apply the tests to the facts in front of you, and be evaluative. You aren’t being asked to recite the rules – your professor wants to see you perform legal analysis.

• **Do not go over the time – no matter how tempting it is!!** Professors will deduct points for late submissions, and half a point can mean the difference between an H and a P.

• **Make sure you answer every question!** I once missed an entire ten-point question that was SO EASY, and I was sad. Check off answers as you go, or do whatever you need to do to make sure you don’t make this basic error.

After the Exam

After an exam, it’s very tempting to immediately forget everything and never lay eyes upon the exam again, even if your professor returns it to you (which YLS professors don’t always do). If you can resist this urge, do. Going to talk to your professor about your exam can help you figure out where you went wrong and how to do better next time. If possible, the best time to do this is after your 1L fall exams, which don’t count, and before your 1L spring exams, which do count. As one friend said, getting feedback early on is critical so that “you’re not making your 1L spring your practice semester.”
GETTING GOOD GRADES

There is more to law school – much more – than getting good grades. Trying something new, deepening your knowledge in a subject area that will be useful for your career, and expanding your horizons are all great reasons to take courses that may be especially challenging for you. But if grades are very important to you, there are a few things you can do to up your odds of getting H’s. (For more general information about choosing classes, please consult the YLW Guide to Course Selection.)

• Choose your courses wisely.
  
  o Have a mix of exam and paper courses. This will make it easier for you to spread your work out.
  
  o All exam courses are not the same! Before you finalize your course schedule, confirm what type of exam each course has (self-scheduled? 24-hour? open book?), and make sure that you have enough room between exams to be able to prepare for each properly.
  
  o Seminars and research assistant positions are more reliable ways to get H’s than large black-letter courses. When you take an exam in a huge lecture course, you only have one chance to show your stuff, and there are no opportunities for revision. When you work more closely with professors, you’ll be responsible for multiple assignments, will have many more interactions, and will have a chance to ask for feedback and revise your work accordingly. Though YLS has a guideline that lecture courses should award H’s to about 30% of the class (a guideline that is followed by some, and utterly ignored by others), grading for RA positions and seminars is far more discretionary, so if all students do Honors-level work, it is possible for all students to receive Honors.
  
  o If you’re considering signing up for a large lecture course with an exam, ask around to figure out if the professor is a tough grader. Some professors grant H’s liberally; others have strict curves and only a third or less of the class will receive H’s.
  
  o Take courses you already know something about. A cynical friend once said, “If you’re here to learn, you’re already at a disadvantage.” Why? If you’re already somewhat familiar with a subject area, you’ll understand the material more readily and can bring in outside concepts and information that relate to the course, which will make you seem knowledgeable. In contrast, if you take courses that are very far outside your comfort zone, you’re going to have a harder time getting an H. Sad but true – people who seek to really challenge themselves are more likely to struggle. (Note: of all of the H-getting strategies described here, this is the one I dislike the most, because for most of us this is the last time we’ll be in school and have a chance to learn new things. Again, there is more to law school than getting good grades!)
  
• Prioritize. Though it would be nice to have all H’s, that may not be a realistic goal if you aren’t willing to sacrifice a lot and lead an essentially monastic life all semester (and even then, it might be impossible). Identify the classes that seem most important to your future career, the ones where it seems that an H may be easier to achieve, and/or more intimate courses that give you a greater chance of walking away with a recommendation if you do well – then give your all to these courses.

• Over-prepare at the beginning. Professors, like students, will often form a basic impression of students based on the first 2-3 weeks of class. To make sure the professor’s impression of you is a good one, be extra-prepared the first several weeks of classes, even if that means scaling back on your other responsibilities. Later in the semester, once you’ve established yourself as a strong student, you can shift how you balance your time.
• **Get to know professors, and go to office hours.** While it would be impossible to gather hard data to support this argument, having a relationship with a professor may help you get a better grade.

  o **If you regularly ask questions, you’ll have a better understanding of the material.** You will actually know more, upping your odds of doing well.

  o **Going to office hours will give you an opportunity to discuss in detail the professor's expectations for the paper or exam.** Some students work with a study group to take a practice exam several weeks before the actual exam, and then go to the professor's office hours to review their answers and ask how they can improve. I once sent an outline of a paper to a professor and then went to discuss it during office hours, and he offered detailed feedback about how I could structure the entire argument to make it stronger. Grading is idiosyncratic, and it’s impossible to get detailed information about what a specific professor is looking for in class or a general review session. But most professors will gladly offer this information if you talk to them one on one.

  o **Professors are human, and they may be more reluctant to give a bad grade to students they know are working extremely hard.** I know a student who failed to turn in the final paper required in a course, and still got an H because the professor just thought the person was great; another who was called into the professor's office hours after doing poorly on an exam because the professor thought the student's exam was “uncharacteristic” and the student should get a second chance; and many others who asked for and received opportunities to re-write “passing” papers. While you should work hard and never rely on being given a second chance, second chances rarely, if ever, come to students who are completely unknown to professors and make no effort to reach out.

• **Ask for extensions.**

  o **Only a few professors are real sticklers about deadlines.** Many, if not most, others will give you an extension. Since exams don’t offer flexibility on scheduling but papers do, asking for paper extensions will give you more time to focus on your exams and then draft stronger papers later.

  o **It is very common for YLS students to ask for extensions, so you should not feel shy about doing so. Everyone does it.** The worst that can happen is that the professor will say no.

  o If you want an extension, make sure to ask several weeks before the due date. That way, you can talk to your professor about what your other obligations are and show that you are taking responsibility for all of your work. A last-minute request makes you seem desperate and disorganized.

• **Ask for the chance to re-write a “passing” paper.** If you aren’t satisfied with your grade, ask to meet with the professor to discuss how you could have made the paper stronger. Then ask if s/he would be willing to consider allowing you to rework the paper and resubmit it for grading. Many professors will allow this, and again, the worst that will happen is that the professor will say no. I was amazed when I learned that people do this, but have been told by both students and professors that it is common. The YLS administration opposes this practice and has urged professors to establish clearer policies for when a draft becomes final for grading purposes, but as of this writing, re-writes are fairly common (and may remain that way even if there is a formal rule change, since profs often ignore such rules).

• **Work your a**

  o **off.** There is no substitute for hard work. Though students sometimes downplay how hard they work to get H’s, most people are not just geniuses who can get H’s like it ain’t no thang. People with strong transcripts work incredibly hard to get good grades and they work this way throughout the year – not just during reading week. You can’t have it all, and if you measure your success only in H’s, you will have to make sacrifices in other areas of your life to get them.
WRITING

For more information and some different viewpoints, please consult the YLW Guide to Writing Requirements.

Why Write Papers?

Writing shouldn't be a priority for just aspiring academics and clerks, or those who still need to fulfill YLS's paper requirements. Everyone should write papers, early and often. Why?

1. Writing papers gives you the chance to strengthen your writing skills, which will be essential in any field.

2. You'll gain practice learning to talk like a lawyer, and the more papers you write, the more you'll have a chance to improve.

3. You'll have the opportunity to work closely with a professor, and if you ask for a reference or letter of recommendation, your prof will have much more to say about you than if s/he were just basing her opinion on your class participation or a single exam.

4. The more papers you write, the greater the chance that you'll be able to have something published at some point. While this is probably most important for future academics or clerks, publishing something nifty and creative looks good on anyone's resume, and it's much easier to get published as a student than it will be later on.7

5. Writing can be fun! It gives you a chance to explore a topic that you care about in-depth.

Choosing A Topic

Despite having written countless papers in college, I was utterly mystified about how to find topics for papers in law school. I felt that I knew too little about the law to know what would constitute an original idea, and I had no clue how to get a sense of the scholarship on a given topic without doing a huge amount of research, which I feared would be a giant waste of time if it turned out someone had written about my topic already. If you feel daunted, you're not alone! But here are a few tips to help you develop ideas for papers:

1. Don't expect greatness. You might achieve greatness, but you shouldn't expect it – especially not at the beginning. If important holes in the scholarship around a certain topic were glaringly obvious, they probably would have been spotted and filled already. Finding a topic worth talking about takes a bit of time, so you shouldn't expect to start the process with a slam dunk innovative idea. Also remember that writing a paper does not demand that you make a genius contribution to the scholarship. Focus on the more immediate goal: writing a smart, thoughtful, well-researched paper that meets the requirements of your assignment.

2. Start with a vague question. This often takes the form of something that strikes you as weird about a certain topic (“Huh! Why is it this way?”). Look at some articles about that general area, and see if this issue has been addressed. You can also ask your professor if they know about relevant scholarship that deals with this issue.

3. Reading isn't a waste of time – it helps you develop your ideas. You may start to read about an issue and then realize, “Oh man, that cool idea I had isn't original at all!” That's just how it goes, because

7 For information on publishing, see the YLW-YLJ Notes on Notes and Student Publication Guidelines, on the Inside site.
there’s no way to know what’s been written about already until you start to read about the subject. But take heart – grounding yourself in the literature will help you identify new areas to explore.

4. **Listen to your professors, and ask them for ideas.** Professors often say things in class like, “This would be a great area for research!” **PRO TIP:** that means that that would be a great area for research. It’s a professor’s job to stay up to date on the scholarship, so if one of your professors casually mentions an area that hasn’t been adequately explored, listen up and go talk to the professor to see if the topic something you could get into. You can also go to your professor’s office hours to chat about a general area you’ve looked into a bit and to ask if they have any ideas about things you could look into. Be straightforward with your professor about your interest in writing about x but your confusion about how to identify an original area to research. RA’ing for a professor may also be a good way to find a paper topic, since the professor may be supportive of you undertaking a project that delves deeper into a subject that relates to the professor’s own work. (This also puts you in a good position to ask the professor to supervise your paper, an added bonus.)

5. **Have a modest concept of originality, and the perspective you can bring to the issue.** Don’t be deterred by the thought that you aren’t going to be the next Judith Resnik, or Stephen Carter, or whoever. If you bring a new perspective to the material, that is often enough. As Proust famously said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” You can bring new eyes. Trust that! And if your paper isn’t all that innovative, you’ll survive, and at the very least you’ll at least have completed your assignment. Learning to write papers is a process, and if this one isn’t the greatest, there’s always next time.

6. **Find a legal angle on something you’re really passionate about.** After doing a lot of post-Sandy relief work, I became very interested in people’s rights during and after disasters, and as of this writing I am working on two papers related to these issues. Because I love learning about this stuff, doing the research is significantly easier than it would have been for a drier subject. When you’re looking for a paper topic, follow your passions. You’re more likely to succeed with something you really enjoy.

### Getting it Done

*The following tips were developed by Yale Law Women and are reproduced here with the permission of the author. They are based on Paul J. Silvia’s book How to Write a Lot: A Guide to Productive Academic Writing and the author’s own “childish motivational strategies.” These tips have been lightly edited for length.*

#### A. Barriers to Writing

Silvia identifies three “specious barriers” to writing. If you see yourself using one of these, take note.

1. “I can’t find time to write.” **AKA “I need a WHOLE DAY to really get going on this thing.”** The problem here, writes Silvia, is the word *find.* You don’t find time to write, you *make time* to write. Schedule time in your planner, even a half hour, and don’t let anything get in the way. Even if you have big chunks of time at the end of the semester now, still schedule yourself writing time – you know things will come

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8 Note: YLW’s Guide to Writing Requirements expressly cautions students not to ask professors for paper ideas; I disagree with this advice. As long as you’ve done some background reading/thinking and are not walking in a completely blank slate, I think it’s perfectly fine to state the obvious: that you don’t know nearly as much about the topic as the professor does and could benefit from some guidance.
up and you want to have that time protected. Try to write every day, even for a little bit, even during exam studying.

You can always **lengthen** the time you write and keep writing if it turns out you have no other commitments, but writing even small bits on a consistent schedule works in a number of ways. It clears the worry from your mind about “when will I find time to write,” it keeps the ideas fresh in your mind so you don’t have to retread every time you sit down to write, and studies have shown that it is the best way to be a productive writer.

2. **“I need to read more articles or cases first.”** Question one: do you have your writing time scheduled? If so, great! Read the articles or cases you need to read during your “writing time”! Writing is not just about typing words; it’s also the process of absorbing and analyzing information. You’re making time for the work that this takes by scheduling yourself writing time – again, it clears your mind of the worry about *when am I going to do this aaaaarrrrgggh* that accompanies the feeling of having ten zillion unread articles.

Reading with a clear goal in mind of writing gives you purpose and focus. Obviously, words need to get on the page, but don’t use the idea of always needing to read infinitely more articles or cases keep you from actually working on the paper. Read the articles or cases and then write about them - all during your writing time.

3. **“I need a better desk/chair/headphones/more space to write.”** Silvia says this one is basically just an excuse. All you need to write is paper and a pencil. Everything else is just a tool that you use – nothing is necessary to the craft of writing. Even the designer of the Aeron chair said there’s no link between furniture and productivity...bad business move, but honest, I guess.

### B. Motivational Strategies

1. **Goal Setting.** One of the most important ways to write a lot, and well, is to set goals and chart your progress, even in a really basic way. First of all, set small goals: writing 100 words, or maybe 200. Try to avoid goals like “write section one!” or “read about preemption!” – make things specific and in bite-sized chunks. Make a list of two articles to read, and outline that section one and take it a paragraph at a time.

2. **Reward Yourself.** Two tools I’ve used to reward myself for these little achievements reveal something about how much my inner child is involved in my writing. I write for kittens and for stickers (of kittens.)

First, a website: [http://writtenkitten.net/](http://writtenkitten.net/). On this page, you set your goal number of words, type your text into the box, and once you’ve written your goal a picture of a kitten pops up to reward you.

Second, give yourself incremental rewards with larger rewards for sticking with it. For every 250 words I wrote, I got a kitten sticker on a little chart. Then, for every ten kitten stickers, I got a big star sticker and a fancy Starbucks drink. Then, for every ten big star stickers/drinks, I got a new Game of Thrones book/episode of Mad Men/new trashy magazine. Whatever – it didn’t matter. It just had to be something cheapish (no excuses for blowing the student loan budget on “rewards”) and something that is motivating to you. Borrow a book from a friend or the library, or hike to the top of East Rock. It’s about acknowledging the progress you’ve made on a goal you set for yourself.

The stickers also let you see your progress. Count words you write and later delete or save for a different project– this is still writing. It’s nice to see the stickers accumulate on your chart when Word just seems to mock you, and all you can do is agonize over how many more pages you need. See also Crummy First Draft (that’s what revising is for!) and It Doesn't Have To Be Perfect It Just Has To Be Done.
PLANNING AHEAD FOR YOUR FUTURE JOB SEARCH

Law school feels very long, but it’s not. You’ll be applying for jobs sooner than you know it – the summer before 2L year if you’re looking for a firm gig, sometime during 2L year if you want to clerk right after school, and early 3L fall if you’re going for public interest positions. Because YLS doesn’t have real grades first semester and it’s fairly difficult to get to know professors through large lectures, you may have as little as one semester to make yourself a strong candidate for the positions you’re after – so don’t wait.

CDO has a number of excellent guides that can help you find your way (see “Getting the Skinny”), and I highly suggest reviewing these guides sooner rather than later, going to the official job fairs and information sessions, and scheduling one-on-one sessions with one of the folks in CDO. This guide focuses on one specific question: what do I need to do early to get the job I want later?

Note: YLS emphasizes a few main job paths: firm jobs, clerkships, and public interest fellowships. This guide tracks those categories because they are the ones I know at least something about (particularly the last). However, they are not the only categories of jobs, and the strategies below are not the only ways to get jobs. Plenty of people do not have jobs by the beginning of 3L year and figure out jobs later by getting in touch with people they’ve worked with previously, asking friends, professors and professional contacts if they know of any positions opening up, or even – GASP! – by applying to public job postings like regular people. Also, the suggestions below pertain to students who seek to clerk, get a fellowship or get a firm job immediately after YLS, but as discussed above, there are many ways to get jobs in any of these fields later on down the line. As with everything in this guide, please take the suggestions here with a grain of salt, and get more information from sources that know the details better than I do.

Firm Jobs

Why Would I Want This?

1. **Firm jobs pay more than all others. WAY more.** Even competitive public interest fellowships pay less than $50,000 a year; firms pay more than twice that. Working at a firm can be a good way of paying off your law school and/or undergraduate debt, supporting your family, or, I don’t know, buying a jet ski.

2. **Applying to work at a firm will give you job security very early on in your law school career.** The Fall Interview Program (or “FIP”) takes place the summer before your 2L year. If you receive and accept an offer for a position the following summer, a permanent job at that firm is basically yours to lose. That means that effectively you could have a permanent job only a third of the way through law school. Students who work at firms their 1L summer can push this timeline up even more.

3. **Firm jobs are among the easiest type to get.** This isn’t a knock on the intelligence of people who work at firms – many are brilliant. But firm jobs are easier to get because there are just so many of them. They are especially easy to get if you are a Yale Law student since there are so few of us and having a Yale is something firms tend to value.

4. **Many people feel that firms provide good training for attorneys regardless of their future plans, and they are a particularly good start for people who may be interested in becoming in-house counsel at a corporation.** Firms can also be a surprisingly good place to work for people who are invested in certain specific public interest issues (for instance, Latham & Watkins has a robust environmental law practice). Finally, firms frequently address novel legal issues, which many find to be exciting.
Why Wouldn't I Want This?

1. Many people find firm work to be unbelievably boring. Firms spend a lot of money and energy during the interview process and over the summer trying to convince you that working at the firm will be a party all the time, and people are often disappointed when reality sets in.

2. Trial time is limited. Many people mistakenly believe that firm jobs will offer them ample opportunities to get in a courtroom, but this is rarely the case. A lot of work is transactional (basically this means negotiating agreements and contracts), and even “litigation” is usually incredibly slow and prolonged (unlike, say, if you were a public defender and in court on new cases constantly).

3. Firm work can seem irrelevant, or even evil. A jaded friend who works at a firm described his work as “morally neutral at best – one big company fighting another big company, and I don’t really care who wins.” At one firm, I spoke to a partner whose entire job for many years consisted of defending the makers of lead paint. Sugarcoat it all you want, but many firms represent corporations that are up to no good.

4. The hours are killer. Many firms require that you work a certain number of billable hours, and many of the hours you’re in your office will not count toward your billable hours. This horrifying fact is explained more fully in CDO’s “The Truth About the Billable Hour.”

What Will I Need to Apply?

Because the Fall Interview Program occurs the summer before your 2L year, you don’t need to do that much to prepare for the process. You’ll need references, but you won’t need extensive letters of recommendation. Having H’s helps a lot, and you’ll want to have at least one on your transcript if at all possible. Because of this, 1L spring is probably the most important semester to buckle down if you’ll be applying to firms. But neither a perfect academic record nor an extensive writing sample is required.

How Should I Prepare For An Interview?

The most important thing to know about getting a firm job is that you have to be personable. I really believe that it all comes down to the interviews. Students of color, women, other “diverse” people and introverted folks may have a harder time than brassy white men because firms are looking for a good “fit,” and that mostly comes down to the interviewers – most of whom are white men – being able to imagine themselves connecting to and working with you. Still, you can do it. Come up with convincing answers to a few questions – why do you want to work at a firm? Why this firm? What do you hope to focus on? Tell me about x on your resume – and keep any reservations you may have about the firm world to yourself.

Where Should I Apply?

Cast a wide net. While people sometimes fail to get firm offers, this is pretty rare, especially if they have at least one H and apply broadly. Keep in mind that essentially every firm that comes to FIP is fairly prestigious, so don’t get caught up in the YLS hype and feel crushed if you don’t get an offer from one of the top 5. Also, almost all of the firms have similar starting salaries, so if you’re in it for the money, basically any of the firms will do. Spend some time on Vault.com and other websites that provide information about the firms, and make sure to check out factors like quality of life and quality of training and supervision, not just the overall ranking. Websites will only tell you so much, but they’re a fine place to start.

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10 The exception is Wachtell, which pays much more.
Clerkships

More information on clerkships is available in the CDO guide, “Judicial Clerkships in the U.S.”¹¹ and in the “Clerkships” tab on the Inside Site, which includes (among other things) information about how to research judges, lists of current YLS grads who are clerking, and a refreshingly frank document titled “unofficial clerkship advice.” NYU also has a useful Specialty Career Memo on Clerkships.¹² The info here is based on these sources and conversations with numerous students who are clerking.

Why Would I Want This?

Clerking means working for a judge, conducting research, and helping to write opinions. Many people find clerking to be exciting because it allows you to peer into the judicial mind, engage with innovative ideas, and see how a courtroom really works. Many employers – even public interest organizations, and especially those that engage in impact litigation – look favorably on the training you receive as a clerk, and if you have a judge who gives detailed feedback, you can improve your legal writing a lot. Depending on the judge you end up clerking for – some are incredibly liberal, and others ragingly conservative – you may derive some satisfaction from helping to advance your vision of the law. Finally, clerking can be an important way of developing a professional network outside of YLS, which may be of particular value to students who have felt lost here.

Because clerking is prestigious, it can be extremely helpful to your future career. Although some people tell you you shouldn’t clerk only for the prestige, I believe that at the end of the day, that is why a lot of people clerk. The reality is that if you want to be a powerful person in certain spheres, you will have to go after certain things for their prestige value, and clerking is one of those things. (Just take a look at the bios of professors and fancy lawyers – they will very often list the judges they clerked for, even decades after the fact.)

NOTE: Even if clerking doesn’t sound interesting to you now, be aware that many people with no prior interest in clerking suddenly become obsessed with the idea their 2L year. For this reason, if there is even a chance that you might want to clerk, make it a goal to develop relationships with at least 2 professors by the end of 2L fall or sooner so that clerking will still be a realistic possibility if you later decide you want to do it.

Why Wouldn’t I Want This?

Clerking isn’t for everyone. Some people are turned off by the application process itself, which is secretive, competitive, elitist, and often disheartening. Others dislike the work, which can be extremely solitary and feel removed from reality. People who are interested in direct services jobs may find clerking to be irrelevant to their career goals, and some direct legal services jobs may even look down on clerkships. (One baffled clinic professor has often asked me why anyone would want to be an “intellectual lackey” for a judge instead of helping others.) And because many judges hire several years ahead, clerking often means needing to fill a “gap” year or two between graduation and the beginning of your clerkship, which some find annoying.

What Will I Need to Apply?

Although in the aggregate Yale is very successful at getting students prestigious clerkships, applying for clerkships requires strong transcripts, recommendations, and interviewing skills, and it is extremely competitive. If you want to try to clerk immediately after law school, you must have at least 2 very strong letters of recommendation by the end of your 2L fall OR SOONER, and if at all possible, one of these people should be willing to make calls to judges’ chambers on your behalf, since that is often the difference between your application being pulled from the pile and it disappearing into the ether. A third letter can be very helpful, and while a trio of Yale profs is ideal, the third letter can come from a 1L summer employer who supervised your legal research and writing. While you don’t need letters in hand to apply – if you

¹¹ Available at http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/CDOGuides.htm (password-protected for YLS students only).
¹² Available at http://www.law.nyu.edu/academicservices/advising/specialtycareer_memos/clerkships.
confirm with recommenders that they will write for you, you can apply with a list of those names and note that letters will arrive later under separate cover, which is better than delaying your applications – you will need solid relationships with 2-3 professors by 2L fall or sooner. Being on the Journal (or at least a journal) also helps a great deal. While some people maintain that being on the Journal is not as important here as elsewhere, my extremely unscientific assessment is that that is hooey and it helps a lot for the most sought-after federal clerkships.

While accolades help, don’t count yourself out if you don’t have all H’s or aren’t on the Journal. As one student said, “Judges accord different weight to different things – while Journal membership may be key to one judge, it may be completely optional for another. Some judges will only look at applicants with all H’s on their transcript, while others couldn’t care less about YLS’s often arbitrary grading system [and look for people with a strong public interest background] … If you want to clerk and you are willing to invest the time in sending out applications, do it.” Though strong recommenders are a must, I know a number of students who have gotten great federal clerkships with transcripts that had a 50/50 H/P split. Folks who look outside of the most coveted circuits can score great positions. And students who strike out during the 2L application season, or who just want to avoid the mad rush, can apply 3L year.

How Should I Prepare?

Good grades and relationships with professors are essential. Buckle down, go to office hours, and take a few black-letter courses that are essential for clerking, such as Fed Courts, Administrative Law and Evidence. Writing early and often is also important for aspiring clerks. Writing a great paper will demonstrate your ability to perform rigorous legal analysis, and getting something published looks great on the ol’ resume.

You should also start doing your research early. With the destruction of “the plan” – an agreement among judges that once dictated when applications were received and offers were made, as an effort to insert a modicum of fairness into the process – certain judges have started accepting clerkship applications during 2L fall. That means you’ll need to know where you want to apply very early. For suggestions about how to begin, consult the sources listed at the beginning of this section or see Appendix D.

If you’re applying for a very coveted spot – such the Court of Appeals for the D.C., Ninth, or Second Circuits, a spot with a “feeder judge” (i.e. a judge who regularly sends clerks to the Supreme Court), or a federal district court clerkship in a major market (such as New York City) – seek out professors who are reputed to know what’s up in the clerkship process. Be aware, though, that many other students may be seeking out these same professors out for this same reason and no one likes to feel like a means to an end, so try to find someone you’re genuinely interested in working with and try not to be too irritating about it. Even if you don’t work with any of these professors, go to their office hours during your 1L fall and ask for their advice about what you should consider doing your 1L spring if you’re trying to clerk. A friend scheduled a meeting with one such professor, brought a copies of his transcript and resume, said he had heard the professor knew a lot about the process, and asked if she would be willing to take a look at his materials to offer advice about what he could do to make himself a stronger candidate. He was humble and grateful, but direct. Don’t be too shy to seek out this type of advice – it is part of a professor’s job to be available for students.

Where Should I Apply?

The more flexible you are geographically, the more options you’ll have. Since the CDO clerkship guide does a much better job of breaking it down than I can, I’ll just reiterate that the YLS standard of what a “good clerkship” is is pretty cray cray and, in the words of one wise grad, “there are a lot more awesome judges out there than the two dozen or so hyper-competitive, super-prestigious ‘feeder’ judges that people will be talking about at first.” You should feel pretty dang proud of yourself if you’re able to get any federal court clerkship anywhere – including at the district court (trial) level, or outside a major market – so long as it’s with a judge you are excited about working with.
Public Interest Fellowships

CDO has developed a number of extremely helpful resources regarding fellowships, all of which are available on the “Public Interest Fellowships” tab on the Inside Site. An overview of fellowships is included in Appendix E. Consult the guides there, read the Public Interest Newsletter CDO sends out, and attend the information sessions CDO puts on. I also highly recommend going to talk to Akua Akyea, CDO’s Public Interest Director, about everything. She can help you figure out organizations to apply to, how to brush up a cover letter, types of fellowships you might be eligible for, and anything else you need to know.

Why Would I Want This?

Public interest fellowships are a great way to get started in a public interest career. You apply with an organization to get funding from some other entity (including the Skadden Foundation, Equal Justice Works, and Yale itself) to work at that organization for one or two years. Public interest organizations love this of course, because it means that they effectively get a free (or cheap) staff member for two years.

Fellowships are a great opportunity for recent graduates to get started in the public interest world, and many fellows end up staying with their host organizations at the end of their fellowship, or moving to permanent positions in their field elsewhere. Because many fellowships value innovation, they can be an opportunity for you to put a creative idea about how to advance social justice into practice. And of course, doing a public interest fellowship will allow you to serve a community you care about.

Why Wouldn’t I Want This?

Fellowships don’t pay a lot – most range from $35,000-$50,000, which can be tough to do for people with undergraduate debt or other financial obligations, even if their law school debt is being covered by Yale’s loan repayment program. People also learn whether they’ve gotten a fellowship very late – sometimes as late as the spring of 3L year – and folks often have a lot of anxiety about not knowing what they’re going to do after school. Fellowship applications are also very demanding and competitive (but what else is new?).

What Will I Need to Apply?

Above all else, you must have a demonstrated commitment to public interest. Grades are significantly less important in the fellowship process, and if you need to cut corners in your academic classes to devote time to a clinic you care about, you should. That said, having good grades does help for some fellowships, such as Skadden, so you shouldn’t disregard them altogether.

You’ll need two, and preferably three strong recommenders by the beginning of your 3L year. You’ll need to have at least one professor and at least one employer. One or more of your recommenders should be in the substantive area you plan to pursue for your fellowship, and/or be a clinic professor.

How Should I Prepare?

During your 1L spring, start doing a clinic, and continue to do clinic work throughout your time at Yale. This is probably the single most important (and fulfilling!!) thing you can do. Even if you have significant public interest experience prior to law school, fellowship grantors will want to see that you have public interest legal experience, so clinics are key. If you start a clinic early, you may also have an opportunity to take on a position of leadership, which is, again, both rewarding and strategic. As early as possible, you should also start to take courses and write papers that relate to your area of interest.

For your 1L summer, choose an organization you have a strong interest in and might eventually want to apply for a fellowship with. Don’t listen to the people who say that 1L summer is an opportunity to “experiment,” because if you take that attitude, you will have wasted an opportunity to get to know an organization you
really respect and might want to work at long-term. Your 1L summer will also give you a chance to get to know other people and organizations in your general area of interest (and to get strong reference from someone in that field), which is particularly important for people who have little or no work experience prior to law school.

During your 2L fall, do serious research on organizations where you might want to work over your 2L summer, and apply early. Your 2L internship will be critical, especially if you didn't click with your 1L summer workplace and still need to find a host organization to apply for fellowships with. Organizations tend to have a strong preference for sponsoring their own interns where possible, so getting your foot in the door at this stage is a great idea. Some factors to consider when choosing an organization:

- **Issue area.** Can I see myself working on these types of issues for a year or two, or longer?
- **Location.** If you are attached to being in a particular place for your fellowship, you need to start building connections to that community as soon as possible, and no later than your 2L summer. Fellowships are not a way to fly into a community you have no prior investment in, so if you want to get to know a certain place, hop to it!
- **Geographic scope of work.** Is this a national or local organization?
- **Success rate in getting fellowships.** You'll already have a huge advantage over other fellowship applicants because you go to Yale, so you probably don't need to worry about the numbers too much. But if you're planning to apply for a fellowship in a very competitive location, such as New York, you might want to consider getting a rough estimate of how successful organizations are in the fellowship application process. You can get this information by looking on the Skadden and Equal Justice Works websites and tallying how often the organization you're interested in has received fellowships in the last 5 to 10 years. The fact that an organization has never hosted a fellow before does not mean they're not a good organization and are destined to never get a fellowship — especially if the organization is smaller and/or outside a major metropolitan area on the East or West Coast — but this is something you should at least consider.

Be aware that splitting your summer with a firm is not favorably regarded by most fellowship grantors since many other fellowship applicants will have done public interest all the way through. If you have financial needs that are pushing you toward a summer firm job but are also considering a career in public interest, you might want to consider working at a private public interest firm, as described in the following section.

During your 2L spring, begin to research other potential host organizations (besides the place you're interning for the summer). Many organizations accept applications beginning in June, and some may take them even earlier. It's very important to reach out early, because many organizations will only sponsor one fellowship candidate, and you want it to be you!

You will need to start putting your application together the summer before your 3L year. Most applications are due in the fall.

**Where Should I Apply?**

Don’t play the prestige game! Yale students often think that places like the national office of the ACLU are the only public interest organizations worth working at, and they overlook smaller, more dynamic groups. The ACLU is a fine place to work — it’s not the only place to work. And in fact, it might not be the best place to work for you. Think broadly about the type of change you’re trying to make, and the range of organizations that serve that interest. Then use public interest travel money\(^{13}\) to go talk to places you’re curious about.

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\(^{13}\) Known as “Travel Reimbursement for Interviews in the Public Interest.”
MONEY

Yale’s Financial Aid Office is one of the friendliest and most helpful offices on campus, so if you are struggling with any sort of financial matter or have questions about anything, go talk to Jill Stone. She is amazing! As one student gushed, “I have never found another person at YLS to be more competent, caring, and helpful. Dealing with the money side is both super stressful and, I think, the thing that students are least likely to talk to each other about, and if every office had a Jill Stone, the school would be a very different place.” This section has been fact-checked by the fabulous Stone herself, so it is 100% accurate.

Random Yale Goodies

Because Yale is a wealthy institution, there are a lot of pots of money that are available to students to get and do all sorts of things. Here are some of the important ones:

- **Temporary loan at the beginning of the fall semester.** If you have extreme financial hardship (as determined on a case-by-case basis by the financial aid office), you can get a temporary loan if you need to pay your rent, buy books etc. before your financial aid disbursement comes in.

- **Technology loan.** Yale will allow you to borrow an additional COAP-eligible loan to cover the cost of a new computer and related peripheries (which includes essentially anything that is computer-related – printer, keyboard, monitor, external hard drive, speakers, etc). 1Ls can borrow up to $3,000, 2Ls can borrow $2,000, and 3Ls can borrow $1,000.

- **Suit loan.** You can get a COAP-eligible loan of up to $350 to cover the cost of a suit, which comes in handy for job interviews (and other fancy events!).

- **Public interest grants.** CDO provides funding for a number of public interest-related expenses. These include Travel Reimbursements for Interviews in the Public Interest, funding to cover registration costs of the Equal Justice Works and NYU Public Interest job fairs, and the Deborah L. Rhode Fund for Public Interest & Pro Bono Service, which covers a variety of expenses related to public interest or pro bono projects.

- **Faculty prizes.** Each year, the faculty awards prizes for papers in certain subject areas, performances in Barrister’s Union, moot court competitions, and clinics, and work submitted to student journals. It’s an honor to be selected, and many of these prizes come with sizable cash awards. (One friend got $1,000!) The prizes address a wide range of subject areas – everything from international human rights law to tax law to art law and legal history. Because cash awards have been a well-kept secret and some of the prize areas are somewhat esoteric, relatively few students have applied for many of these awards, so throw your hat in the ring. My prizewinning friend suggests submitting every single paper you write at YLS to up your odds of winning.

Summer Employment

The general rule is that if you work at a firm, you can only keep $6000 or so of what you make to live on over the summer; the rest will used to reduce your aid (rather than your debt), and will usually reduce your aid dollar-for-dollar (though the precise amount by which your aid is reduced will also depend on other factors, including your student and parent contributions for that year). Because of this, some people mistakenly conclude that it’s not worth it to do a firm job if they’re receiving financial aid because the money they make will effectively disappear. This is true for some people, but not true if:

- **You work a total of more than 12 weeks.** You can keep any money you make after 12 weeks, and it won’t be deducted from your financial aid grant. If you work for a firm, a couple of weeks can add up to a sizable chunk of change.
• You have outstanding educational debt that isn’t covered by COAP, plan to use the money you earn to pay off that debt, and gain prior approval from the Financial Aid office to do so. THIS IS HUGE, Y’ALL. If you have 1) more than $30,000 of undergraduate debt, 2) debt from a graduate degree, or 3) private undergraduate loans that are in active repayment (i.e. you can’t defer them until after you graduate from YLS), you can use firm earnings to pay off these debts. Under certain circumstances, the financial aid office will also allow students with credit card debt to pay off that debt with firm earnings. I sincerely hope that everyone to whom this applies knows this already, but you can put a HUGE dent in your outstanding educational or other debt if you work at a firm one or both summers.

Plaintiff-Side/Private Public Interest Firms: Making Money for Doing Good

Private public interest (PPI) firms bring together two amazing things – doing good, and cash money. Though often overlooked because of the apparent dichotomy between working for a firm and working on public interest issues, PPI firms are in some ways the best of both worlds. If you have debt or other financial needs but want to stay away from corporate-centered firms, you should seriously consider working at a PPI firm. If you are interested in plaintiff-side firms, consult Harvard’s Private Public Interest and Plaintiffs’ Firm Guide, then visit the CDO website to find contact information for other YLS students and grads who have worked at these firms. Be aware, though, that most PPI firms do not make job offers immediately after law school.

Term-Time Jobs

Many people underestimate how much money they can make and keep from doing term-time jobs. But the rules for term-time jobs are different than as those for summer firm jobs, and unlike with summer jobs, for term-time jobs reduce your loans before your scholarships. That means that if you have loans, you can pay down a bunch of your debt while you’re in school by doing term-time positions. Here’s how it works:

1. Many term-time positions pay a lot (at least as far as I’m concerned). For example, TF positions at the college vary across departments/courses, but I made $5700 for teaching one section of a history course; more time-intensive classes pay as much as $10,000. Even though YLS will consider this in calculating your financial aid package for the following year, you still get to keep a bunch of it, because

2. You get to keep the first $1000 you make, plus 30% of the remainder. (By “keep,” I mean that that amount will not be used to reduce your loans or scholarships at all.) Thus, using the TF position as an example, if you teach one section at $5700, you get to keep about $2410 (the initial $1000 plus 30% of the remaining amount). True, $2410 does not sound as sweet as $5700, but relative to the total budget for the year and the amount you could make doing other jobs, that is still a lot.

3. Financial Aid calculates the net term time income as the total you make minus the first $1000 you get to keep, times 70% (with you keeping the remaining 30%). That net income is then checked against (per Jill Stone) “your calculated summer earnings contribution, asset contribution and then the parent contribution. If any of those contributions (combined) exceed your term time net income, no adjustment ($0) is made.” In other words, if you were expected to pay something anyway because of your assets/income or your parents’ contribution, and the amount you earn is less than the amount you were initially expected to pay, you still pay the amount you were expected to pay before.

4. After that, Financial Aid first uses the money to reduce your loans, not your grants - so you don’t “lose” this money, you pay it next academic year rather than in the form of loans later on down the line.

5. Finally, your grant/scholarship is affected – i.e. you effectively “lose” a portion of your earnings – only after you have kept the $1000 + 30% *and* your loans have been reduced by $7200. So by working a term-time job, you can reduce your loans by up to $7200/year, plus keep a bunch of money for your immediate needs.

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TEACHING FELLOW POSITIONS

Why would I want to be a Teaching Fellow?

Being a Teaching Fellow is a great way to engage with your interests outside of the law, gain (or continue!) teaching experience, and earn a significant amount of money during the term. As a TF, you’ll have a chance to engage with top-notch professors and students while pursuing a topic you’re passionate about. I personally think it’s one of the best jobs you can do while at Yale, and because TF positions are available in virtually every department at the college, there really is something for everyone.

What do Teaching Fellows do?

As a teaching fellow at Yale College, you are responsible for leading one or two smaller discussion sections to complement a large lecture course. The responsibilities and weekly hours of TFs vary by course and department. For example, in some courses, TFs are expected to provide frequent and intensive writing feedback, or to grade problem sets or vocabulary tests on a weekly basis. In other courses, TFs will be expected to grade only a couple of exams and papers throughout the semester. Because of the differences in the kinds of activity required, compensation levels vary as well. Details about the salaries and responsibilities of the different types of TF positions are available on the website of the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

How can I get this sweet, sweet job?

A few things make finding a TF position challenging:

1. TF positions generally aren’t posted publicly.
2. First priority goes to graduate students, not law students.
3. The number of TF positions in a given course is dependent on the number of students who enroll in the course. Because professors don’t have control over class size, they usually don’t know in advance exactly how many TFs they’ll need.

That said, with some legwork, you’ll have a good shot at getting a TF position. First, log on to Yale.edu/oci to look at courses for next semester, and look at subject areas that are of interest to you. (Remember that you can also take courses for law school credit, so while you’re at it, you might want to see if there’s anything you want to sign up for as a student!) Next, identify courses in that subject area that interest you. Lecture courses are the most likely to need many TFs, and in the humanities, lecture courses meet twice a week and usually have an extra hour listed that is reserved for the section, so look for listings that say something like, “MW 1.30-2.20, 1 HTBA” as the meeting time (the “1 HBTA” is the placeholder for the section). Finally, email the professors teaching courses you’re interested in, say that you would love to be a TF for his/her course, briefly describe your relevant experience, and attach your resume. Even though the professor is may not be able to give you a yes or no right away — the administrative assistant of each department is ultimately responsible for assigning TFs and has to give graduate students priority — this is the best way to make a connection with a professor. (I have a friend who got TF positions every semester she was at Yale by doing this sort of outreach.) In addition to emailing individual professors, you can get in touch with the Administrative Assistant for the Department of Graduate Studies, or the administrative assistant for a specific department you’re interested in, and ask about available spots. Even if there is nothing now, they can often keep your resume on file to consider you for future or last-minute openings.

15Available at www.yale.edu/graduateschool/academics/program.html. For more detailed information, see http://www.yale.edu/printer/bulletin/htmlfiles/grad/financing-graduate-school.html#teaching_fellowships.
T**AKE C**ARE

If you've made it through this entire guide, you're probably feeling kinda stressy at this point, but I hope having read it will spare you the stress of having no clue what to do later on. In the short term, here are a few suggestions to help you relax:

1. **Do your thing.** I have a friend who gives herself a new manicure every day because it makes her feel special. I currently live in Brooklyn and commute to YLS, and host a weekly dinner party. Other friends go to church every week. Still others refuse to work on Saturdays. Everybody's got their something. If you are feeling like you don't have time for your something, I urge you to consider that a high-stress time is when you need that thing more than ever.

2. **Get out of the law school,** in ways large and small. For instance, although people act like there is only one library on Yale's campus, in fact there are a lot, and many - such as the main library, which is literally right across the street - are very beautiful places to work where you won't be as stressed by your fellow law students. You can take classes outside of the law school, either at the college or in other grad programs, and receive credit for these classes! You can be a Teaching Fellow at the college and help others learn about a subject you love, while making lotsa $$$. Connecticut also has charming things to offer, like apple picking\(^{16}\) and the Durham Fair\(^{17}\) (my personal favorite event of the year - there are animals and carnival rides and country crafts and fried foods and WHAT MORE COULD YOU WANT). If you're in the mood for high-quality art, Dia Beacon and Storm King are about an hour and a half away by car. The ever-charming Northampton, MA is about the same distance. Escape!

3. **Be a human.** There are a lot of things I like about the law and about law school, but it can be extremely dehumanizing. I think this is in part because people are really busy and also think that "thinking like a lawyer" = "thinking like a robot." You aren't a robot; don't expect others to be a robot. Please say hi to people, ask someone to get a cup of coffee, be willing to tell them when you have no idea what's going on so they don't feel so alone, etc. Have a bunch of people over for dinner and talk about your lives before law school, which already seem like hazy dreams. Learn the names of the security guards, the shuttle drivers, that person you always see at the library. If there is a moment in class where you see that someone seems to have been having a hard time, check in on them, even if you don't know them. If someone has said something you really like, let the person know. It is amazing how much you can improve your own quality of life and that of the people around you by doing small things like this.

4. **Reach out if you need to.** If you are having a hard time with anything academically or personally, please don't give yourself a hard time about having a hard time. Sometimes living your life and getting through some things is more important than school - yes, even The Yale Law School. Reach out to people if you feel like you need some company or help. Many students become Coker Fellows or Dean's Advisors in part because they have faced challenges themselves and appreciate the importance of creating supportive networks for people and not acting like everyone should be fine all the time when in reality all sorts of things happen. The fact that this is a professional as well as social environment can be intimidating at first and may make many people disinclined to admit when they're struggling, but please reach out to your Coker, DA, affinity group buddy, or someone else if you need a friend, a high-five, a sandwich, or a friendly ear. I also highly recommend making use of mental health services. You don't have to be in a “crisis” mode to go there, you can just go for regular talk therapy and it's totally normal to do this (countless law students do it). For more information about accessing therapy at Yale, see Appendix C.

\(^{16}\) http://www.lymanorchards.com/.

\(^{17}\) http://www.durhamfair.com/.
5. **Draw on your experiences and friendships outside YLS.** Law school can quickly become consuming, and you may find it hard to talk to people who don’t immediately understand what a “small group” is or have never heard of Learned Hand. But actively maintaining relationships with people outside YLS is critical. These people know who you are, care about you a lot, and can help remind you that you have a life outside YLS, both now and in the future. You want people who couldn’t care less what a “tort” is. You need people like this.

6. **Make your own fun.** Although Yale’s course offerings are more limited than those of larger institutions and many specialized interests are not represented at all, Yale offers many ways for students to create groups and events that address their passions, and to receive Yale funding to do so. For example, students can start and receive credit for reading groups. You can apply for funding from the Plimpton Fund to support community-building events. You can join an existing student group and plan cool events through that organization. You can propose a student-run conference or volunteer to convene a panel for Reblaw, and bring in speakers from all over the country to come talk about ideas you care about. I have done all of these things, and I have found them to be great ways to build community with like-minded students at Yale and to forge connections with amazing folks outside YLS.

7. **Take time off.** Many students believe that taking a semester or year off from Yale is a really big deal and you should only consider doing it if you just can’t stand being here anymore. But I think people should be more open to taking a break if they have questions about what they’re trying to get out of being here, are very interested in exploring a career path that is not well-represented at Yale, or want to try something new. Though you will need to talk to the deans if you’re interested in taking a semester off, Yale permits students to several semesters off over the course of their time at Yale, and you need not be in the midst of a crisis to take this time (though being in a crisis is also a legitimate reason to take time). I have a friend who decided to do a joint degree at Harvard Business School and is there this year getting started. Another friend had personal difficulties, took several semesters off, and scored her dream job after re-enrolling at YLS. Another had limited work experience and decided to go work with a non-profit on the West Coast. All of these are great reasons to consider taking a break. You have the rest of your life to be a lawyer, and the easiest time to take a breather or try something else is now.

**DID YOU LIKE THIS GUIDE? PAY IT FORWARD!**

Like what you see in this guide? You can help support your peers and break down the culture of secrecy in a few simple ways.

1. **Encourage people to apply for things (and encourage them in general).** While a lack of positive feedback is a problem for many YLS students, it can be even more difficult for students who feel marginalized here overall. Tell folks in your class when you feel like they’ve made valuable contributions, and if there’s something you think they’d be great at, encourage them to apply.

2. **Share what you know.** Have you gathered a lot of information about clerking? Do you feel like you’ve mastered how to take a black letter exam? Offer yourself as a resource to other people (yes, helping takes work!). The easy version of this: if someone sends you useful information about anything - particularly if that information seems “secret” and designed to give a small number of people an advantage – forward it to EVERYONE. If you figured out a useful way to do something – EMAIL IT TO THE WALL. Those who don’t care won’t read it. Those who do care will be enormously grateful.

3. **Contribute to this guide.** This guide was created with contributions from many students, but there are some perspectives that are represented minimally or not at all. If you have something to add to the wisdom included here, please email yalelawsecrets@gmail.com so that your comments can be incorporated into future versions of the guide.
CONCLUSION

You will face some disappointment here – it’s inevitable. But remember that your worst-case scenario, career-wise, is other people's dream. Pretty much no matter what you do, you'll be able to get a good job after this, and even if you are somehow dead last in your class (which is actually impossible given YLS's grading system), you will still graduate with a Yale Law degree. People at other law schools would kill to be in your position, to say nothing of the enormous number of people who have had nowhere near as many opportunities as you have and for whom YLS or higher education in general is so far out of their reality that they could never even think to dream about it.

Being able to be in school full-time and get a fancy degree after the fact is a huge privilege. I'm not saying this to make you feel like you should be happy 100% of the time, or that you can't be bummed if you didn't get something here you really wanted. But don't waste the opportunity you have here by being too sad about the things you think you didn't get, because you can be content with the knowledge that law school is a mere three years and at this point you'd have to try really, really hard not to land on your feet in a pretty good situation. Do your best, and believe that you will have a good life no matter what happens here.
APPENDIX A: MODEL ATTACK OUTLINE

Although every student’s attack outline will look different, the following is an excellent example of a decision tree (excerpted from a longer outline).

Legend:
Checkboxes = steps / standards / questions you ask yourself about the facts
Skull & crossbones = remember this, caution
Pencil = policy
Thumbs down = bad policy rationales (in your opinion or your professor’s)
OJO = watch out, don’t make this common mistake!

Under what law? Is it a crime (conduct and MR)? Is there discretion? Is there a defense?

GENERAL CRIMES  ☐ act or omission? ☐ general or specific intent?
☐ if omission, was there a legal duty?
  ☐ was there strict liability? See Loge, Wilson
    ☐ particularly traffic offenses, but see Kremer
      ☒ crime of omission might require state to prove mens rea, see Lambert
    ☐ but criminal negligence may be enough, see Romero-Garcia
    ☒ courts might be more comfortable when there’s actual knowledge, see T.R.D.
    ☒ esp. concerning federal malum prohibitum crimes, see Cheek even though public welfare crimes
      are for protection of public, not culpability of offender
    ☒ judges might want to use clear statement rule to construe against, Loge dissent
  ☐ other duties: statute, contract, qualifying relationship, seclusion. See Kuntz
    ☐ MPC §2.01(3): liability if “(a) the omission is expressly made sufficient by the law defining the offense,
      or (b) a duty to perform the omitted act is otherwise imposed by law.”
☐ if act, was it voluntary?
  OJO limited exception: Martin official action coercive, not voluntary
    Can’t criminalize status (Robinson) but yes to possession and behavior (Powell, Kellogg)
  ☐ can it be mitigated? See In re. Joseph suicide pact case
☐ is it a general intent crime?
  ☐ when conduct itself is blameworthy: rape, assault. Focused on conduct, not circ./result
    ☐ plus factor when blameworthiness/circumstances less clear
      ☐ criminal negligence: Sargent passive conduct with circumstance element
      ☐ malice: Fennel maybe because results so extreme/unintended?
    OJO! Mistake of fact must be honest and reasonable
☐ is it a specific intent crime?
  ☐ when guilty of trying to cause injury or bring about harmful or legally forbidden result
    OJO! Hard to distinguish circumstances from required result Oriello (compare G1+: Sargent)
    Mistake need only be honest
☐ is it under the MPC?
  ☐ element analysis
  ☐ if no culpability standard given, reckless
  ☐ one mens rea term applies presumptively to all elements – compare Ducker w. Sargent
  ☐ can prove lower MR w/ higher one: P, K, R, N
  §2.02 privileges cognitive over moral fault (drugs) adherence to statutory text
IF SOMEONE WAS KILLED

☐ causation? ☐ mens rea?

☐ did D’s actions ‘cause’ the death?
  ☐ take your victim as you find him, ‘eggshell’ rule Carlson
  ☐ proximate cause: intervention will break chain if not reasonably foreseeable, more than negligent act.
  ☐ The more reasonable the action of the victim, the more proximate Robertson
  ☐ moral luck problem: culpability based on results, not intent

OJO! See special rules for attempt, conspiracy, complicity and homicides not/intentional

☐ was it premeditated and deliberate? – first degree murder
  ☐ cool reflection? No time requirement, see Coleman, Tercer
  ☐ transferred intent if killed the wrong person
  ☐ in course of commission of enumerated felony?

☐ was there malice aforethought and/or extreme recklessness? – second degree murder
  ☐ intentional but not premeditated
  ☐ not intentional/implied malice
    ☐ intended to cause serious injury
    ☐ depraved heart; abandoned and malignant heart
    ☐ extreme/general indifference to human life
    ☐ MPC: “recklessness that can be fairly assimilated to purpose or knowledge”
     ☞ Suarez not about probability of harm, about wickedness – implies general
     ☞ maybe issue is utter lack of social utility

☐ committed in the course of a qualifying felony? – first or second degree murder
  ☐ to deter felons from killing negligently or recklessly
    ☐ often punished harshly for the deaths of people they didn’t want to kill – MI abolished
  ☐ MPC §210.2 extreme indifference includes homicide during commission of “robbery, rape, arson, burglary, kidnapping, felonious escape”
    ☞ merger: felonious conduct inseparable from homicide act can’t be charged w/ both
  ☐ if unenumerated: evaluate the risk like proximate cause
  ☐ did the felony raise the risk of homicide? By how much?
  ☐ case by case rather than categorical approach

☐ was there reasonable provocation and/or extreme mental and emotional distress? – voluntary manslaughter ☞ would otherwise be murder but mental state added
  ☐ most states: provocation is imperfect defense to murder, reduces to manslaughter
  ☐ reasonable provocation: likely to produce in ordinary person such that capacity for reflection or restraint eclipsed

OJO! excuses emotion, not conduct; must come from victim
  ☐ objective: ☞ violence prosecution: ☐ provocation not legally
    ☞ mere words sufficient
    ☞ trespass w/o threat of violence
  ☐ subjective: actually in this case ☐ cooling off period
  ☐ note on burdens: Wilson, Patterson

☐ MPC §210.3(b) EMED expanded provocation
  - includes non-hot emotions ie fear, grief
  - burden on prosecution to disprove once burden of production met
  - subjective standard ☞ Marrero, Goetz
    ☞ gender – excuse for men killing girlfriends, theoretically better for battered women

☐ was there ordinary recklessness? See MPC on risk and awareness
☐ was there negligence? See MPC on risk and awareness
APPENDIX B: STUDYING FOR THE BLUEBOOK EXAM

This sample study plan was created by Christopher Lapinig ’13, a former Diversity Chair of the Journal.

Studying for the Bluebook Exam is completely manageable. Starting as early as possible will allow you to study at an extremely leisurely pace. If you start studying during Spring Break and can devote a half-hour or an hour each day, that will give you more than enough time to learn the skills you need to pass the Bluebook Exam. If you can’t start that early or devote that much time to studying, don’t worry, either. If you can give yourself about 15 hours to study, that should be enough time to learn what you need to know. Here’s a Sample Study Plan, based on how I studied for the Bluebook Exam.

1. **Read LINDA J. BARRIS, UNDERSTANDING AND MASTERING THE BLUEBOOK (2007).**
   [2 hours] Most people will dive into reading the Bluebook, but I found it intolerable and incomprehensible to pore through the rules. The Barris book is, to the best of my knowledge, the most digestible summary of the Bluebook rules out there. It explains to you the most important details of the Bluebook in plain English, with really clear examples. It’s a short read—about 120 double-spaced pages. The one downside to it is that some of the formatting is based on the practitioner rules of the Bluebook (the blue pages in the front of the Bluebook), which are slightly different from the academic rules that make up most of the Bluebook.

2. **Take the LexisNexis Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) exercises.** [4-5 hours]
   The *Yale Law Journal* will give you practice exercises and Bluebook exams to do, and they’re great resources. But they’re also fairly long. When you’re just starting out, I recommend taking the LexisNexis Interactive Citation Workshop exercises first. They’re bite-sized online exercises that ask you to correct one citation at a time. You input your corrections, and it shows you what you got right, what you got wrong, and why. You can access these exercises for free at [http://www.lexisnexis.com/icw/exercise_main.aspx?type=B](http://www.lexisnexis.com/icw/exercise_main.aspx?type=B).

3. **Read through the Bluebook itself.** [5-10 hours]
   Yes, it’s not the most fun thing in the world to do, but it does help to go through each of the Bluebook rules. Hopefully, reading the Barris guide will make it much easier to go through the Bluebook itself. Pay special attention to the exceptions that the Bluebook flags, such as the Fifth Circuit split. Tab each of the rules and the tables for easy access during the Bluebook exam.

4. **Take the Yale Law Journal practice exercises and practice examinations.** [Varies] Use the YLJ resources to practice your timing. In 2011, the Journal Source & Citation Examination was five pages and four-hours long. In 2012, it was four pages and three-and-a-half-hours long. So try to get to a place where you can get through each page in about forty-five minutes. Note that, for some practice exercises, you may not have a source packet to check—which is basically a packet of primary and secondary sources that you’ll have to check quotations and propositions in the exercise against. If you’re doing an exercise without a source packet, keep that in mind and know that you’ll have to save some portion of your forty-five minute budget (at least ten minutes) for the source packet checking that you’ll have to do during the actual Bluebook exam.

Don’t let your classmates stress you out. You can go to the Bluebook trainings that the *Journal* holds, but just know that some of your classmates will inevitably bring questions about obscure, hardly used sources and citation formats that will likely not show up on the actual Bluebook Exam. If you’d rather avoid the crazy peer pressure that those types of environments create, then reach out to your *Yale Law Journal* buddy, someone else on the Admissions Committee, or other *Journal* friends that you may have to get some one-on-one Q&A time. Just remember that, if you overhear a classmate asking what sounds like a ridiculous question about the Bluebook Exam, it’s probably a ridiculous question.
APPENDIX C: ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

This information was provided by Dean Overly in an email sent in September 2013. It has been edited slightly for length and my comments are included in italics. Questions should be directed to Mental Health or Dean Overly.

Each year, more than 20% of the Law School population sees a clinician at the Mental Health and Counseling Department at Yale Health. While therapy is usually short term, there is no automatic number of visits and the length of treatment is discussed with the student in the context of their clinical situation. [The Department states that the default is to allow students 10-12 sessions per academic year; more are permitted where the student is dealing with a crisis or managing a serious long-term problem, such as depression.]

How Long Does It Take To Get An Appointment?

Appointments for an initial consultation can be made by phone (203-432-0290) or in person, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm. Appointment times for the initial visit are generally available within two or three days.* In an urgent situation the student can be seen the same day by the on call clinician. During the initial consultation, you can discuss your concerns and treatment options with a mental health professional. Everything discussed in sessions is confidential.

After the initial consultation, you will be matched with a therapist who will contact you by phone to set up the next appointment. There is sometimes a wait at this phase. Some period of wait time is normal, both at Yale Health and as it would be with private providers within the community. Should something change between your initial evaluation and your first appointment that necessitates more immediate care, you should call Mental Health & Counseling and communicate this change in circumstances to your intake clinician; again, in any urgent situation that arises after hours you should reach out to the Acute Care Department and ask for the Mental Health Clinician.

When Can I Access Mental Health and Counseling Services?

Regardless of whether you have accessed Mental Health & Counseling before, for urgent situations you can also always access an on-call clinician after office hours and on weekends and holidays, through the Acute Care Department at 203-432-0123 and ask for the Mental Health Clinician.

How Will Seeking Help Impact My Ability to be Admitted to a State’s Bar?

Mental Health & Counseling records for Yale students are separate from other medical records and are kept separate from other health records in Mental Health & Counseling and are not electronic. Mental Health & Counseling will not release information about a patient to anyone including Deans, professors, family, friends, employers, the government, or bar examiners without your written permission. Should you have concerns about the ways in which mental health treatment will impact your ability to take the bar, you are encouraged to speak with Dr. Lorraine Siggins at 203-432-0290, or to Dean Overly.

Other Services

If you would like to pay out of pocket or use your own insurance, the Mental Health and Counseling Department can provide a referral (in New Haven or elsewhere). Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers in CT (http://www.lclct.org/) also offers law students 4 free visits to a mental health professional every year.

*Note: There is often a rush for services at the beginning of the semester, in part because students who were in therapy the previous year must be re-evaluated each year before resuming services. If you want to get started in therapy at the start of the year, I suggest calling over the summer to schedule your intake.
APPENDIX D: CLERKSHIP RESEARCH

The following tips come from a student who is currently clerking in the Second Circuit, and applied his 2L year.

The clerkship "process" is a confusing mess that has become more chaotic in recent years. To navigate the process, you should talk to as many people as you can -- former clerks and current clerks of judges you are interested in. Sometimes, people who have clerked for one judge can give you the inside scoop on other judges in the same district/circuit as well.

Current clerks are the best source of information about when the judge plans to look at applications and extend interview offers. Former clerks are the best source of information about what the clerkship experience was like (although be warned that most clerks will speak glowingly about their clerkships -- it's your job to filter out the exceptional praise from the more generic fanfare). Most clerks -- especially those who graduated from YLS -- are happy to speak with clerkship applicants.

How do you find out who these clerks are? Ask 3Ls about recent graduates currently doing clerkships and your professors about past students of theirs who have clerked for various judges. When you talk to one clerk, ask if they have any friends clerking for other judges that you can talk to. And take advantage of the Leadership Directories -- a website that you have free access to through CDO. It's a pretty comprehensive directory of current clerks, judicial assistants, and other people working for federal judges. Sending cold e-mails to current clerks doesn't work all the time, but often times they do respond.

Do you hate "networking"? You're certainly not alone, but for better or worse, reaching out to folks is a critical part of the clerkship process. The first and most important challenge to the clerkship process is figuring out when to apply to a particular judge, and the only guaranteed way you can get this information is by asking someone currently working for the judge. People who are clerking or who have clerked know the application process can be a mysterious black box, so most clerks are more than happy to entertain phone calls and e-mails inquiring about the logistics of applying.

Phone conversations don't have to be long or elaborate. There are a couple of basic questions you can ask former/current clerks. These include:

- Has the judge hired all of his clerks for next year? What about the year after? (Oftentimes, federal judges, especially circuit judges, hire clerks years in advance.)
- When do you think the judge will start looking at clerkship applications?
- Should I send my application materials through the online application system, through e-mail, or as hard copies?
- What do you think the judge is looking for in his/her clerks?
- When do you think the judge will start interviewing clerkship candidates?
- By when do you think the judge will be done hiring clerks?

Remember -- the more people you talk to, the better. You may have some awkward conversations here and there, but it's par for the course. The clerkship process is a word-of-mouth game, and if you're not a big networker, clerkship applications are a good opportunity to push yourself out of your comfort zone.

Share what you learn! Doing research about judges takes a lot of time, so start early and consider sharing information about judges with your classmates, since it's a waste of everyone's time to have 20 different people calling the same chambers and asking the same basic questions. You can contribute information you find out about when judges are accepting applications, and for which years, to the YLS clerkship Google Doc, available here: http://bit.ly/ylsclerking.
## APPENDIX E: FELLOWSHIP OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellowship Name (by application deadline)</th>
<th>Application Deadline*</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Fellowship Duration</th>
<th>Scope of Funding</th>
<th>Salary/Stipend</th>
<th>Fellowship Notification</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gruber Fellowship</td>
<td>December 2, 2013</td>
<td>Graduating students or recent graduates (within three years) of all Yale professional schools</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>Yes Project promoting women’s rights or global justice including contributing to the rule of law, human rights, or the promotion of justice in the legal systems</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>Late December</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heyman Fellowship</td>
<td>January 30, 2014</td>
<td>Graduating students or recent graduate (within approx. three years)</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>No Work with high level leaders in U.S. federal government; no political campaigns or judicial clerkships</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernstein Fellowship</td>
<td>February 3, 2014</td>
<td>Graduating students or recent graduate (within five years)</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>Yes Human rights advocacy work</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>Late March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robina Fellowship</td>
<td>February 3, 2014</td>
<td>Graduating students or recent graduate (within five years)</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>Yes Human rights work, particularly foreign and international judicial clerkships, internships with international courts and tribunals and inter-governmental or governmental agencies, or independent</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>Late March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liman Fellowship</td>
<td>January 6, 2014</td>
<td>Any YLS graduate</td>
<td>Up to 12 months (with possibility of extension)</td>
<td>No Work on public interest legal issues</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>January – March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale Public Interest Fellowship (YPIF)</td>
<td>Late January</td>
<td>Graduating students or recent graduate (within approx. three years)</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>Yes Work on any public interest issue</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>Early April</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm">http://www.law.yale.edu/studentlife/cdostudentsylspublicinterestfellows.htm</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on information available at the time this information was compiled. Make sure to confirm deadlines.

Please note that fellowship terms and deadlines may be subject to change. Check the websites of fellowships to confirm exact due dates and requirements.
## Appendix E: Fellowship Overview (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellowship Name (by application deadline)</th>
<th>Application Deadline*</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Fellowship Duration</th>
<th>Funds International Work?</th>
<th>Scope of Funding</th>
<th>Salary/Stipend</th>
<th>Fellowship Notification</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USDOJ Honors Program</td>
<td>Sept. 3, 2013 @ 11:59 pm EDT</td>
<td>Recent grad; post clerk; post fellowship</td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Work with participating DOJ components and US Attorneys’ Offices</td>
<td>$50,287 - $89,033</td>
<td>Late November through March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.justice.gov/careers/legal/entr">www.justice.gov/careers/legal/entr</a> y.html</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal Justice Works Fellowship</td>
<td>Sept. 17, 2013 @ 5:00 pm EDT</td>
<td>Recent graduated preferred; ok if have had YLS fellowship</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No staff attorney position; no routine criminal defense work</td>
<td>$41,000 plus standard entry-level attorney at host organization</td>
<td>December through March</td>
<td><a href="http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/post-">www.equaljusticeworks.org/post-</a> grad/equal-justice-works-fellowships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skadden Fellowship</td>
<td>October 7, 2013 @ 5:00 pm EDT</td>
<td>2014 graduates and outgoing law clerks</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No criminal justice; no environmental; must have direct services component</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>December 6, 2013</td>
<td><a href="http://www.skaddenfellowships.org/">www.skaddenfellowships.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soros Justice Fellowship - Advocacy</td>
<td>Oct. 23, 2013 @ 11:50 pm EDT</td>
<td>2 years advocacy experience (includes internships and clinics)</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Fellow may be based internationally (includes international travel)</td>
<td>Fellow must address broad goals of reducing mass incarceration, challenging extreme punishment and promoting justice system accountability in the U.S.</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>February</td>
<td><a href="http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/">www.opensocietyfoundations.org/</a> grants/soros-justice-fellowships</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Barrett Prettyman and Stuart Stiller Post-Graduate Fellowship</td>
<td>Nov. 1, 2013</td>
<td>Recent law graduate; award contingent upon admission to DC Bar</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Participation in two year program leading to LL.M. degree</td>
<td>$53,500</td>
<td>Semi-Finalists in late December; Finalists in early April</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academ">www.law.georgetown.edu/academ</a> ics/academic-programs/clinical-programs/our- clinics/criminal-defense-prisoner-advocacy/graduate-teaching- fellowships.cfm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presidential Management Fellowship</td>
<td>TBA (typically late November)</td>
<td>Completion of graduate or professional degree in year of application or within previous 2 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>No – but may be posted abroad with US federal government agency</td>
<td>Placement with U.S. federal government agency</td>
<td>Base salary $41,563</td>
<td>Semi-Finalists in late December; Finalists in early April</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pmf.gov">www.pmf.gov</a></td>
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<td>Echoing Green Fellowship</td>
<td>Early December</td>
<td>Must be 18 or older and speak fluent English</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Funding, support and technical assistance to launch social entrepreneur organization</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td><a href="http://www.echoinggreen.org/fellowship/">www.echoinggreen.org/fellowship/</a> echoing-green-fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative for Public Interest Law at Yale, Inc.</td>
<td>March 1, 2014</td>
<td>Up to 12 months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Projects that protect the legal rights or interests of inadequately represented groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>Late April</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.yale.edu/studenti">http://www.law.yale.edu/studenti</a> fe/cdostudentsyPublicinterestfell owships.htm</td>
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*Based on information available at the time this information was compiled. Make sure to confirm deadlines.*