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# Getting To Maybe

## Getting to Maybe

*How to Excel on Law School Exams*



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## Synopsis

Professors Fischl and Paul explain law school exams in ways no one has before, all with an eye toward improving the reader's performance. The book begins by describing the difference between educational cultures that praise students for "right answers," and the law school culture that rewards nuanced analysis of ambiguous situations in which more than one approach may be correct. Enormous care is devoted to explaining precisely how and why legal analysis frequently produces such perplexing situations. But the authors don't stop with mere description. Instead, *Getting to Maybe* teaches how to excel on law school exams by showing the reader how legal analysis can be brought to bear on examination problems. The book contains hints on studying and preparation that go well beyond conventional advice. The authors also illustrate how to argue both sides of a legal issue without appearing wishy-washy or indecisive. Above all, the book explains why exam questions may generate feelings of uncertainty or doubt about correct legal outcomes and how the student can turn these feelings to his or her advantage. In sum, although the authors believe that no exam guide can substitute for a firm grasp of substantive material, readers who devote the necessary time to learning the law will find this book an invaluable guide to translating learning into better exam performance.

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## Customer Reviews

Good book. I bought it for my niece, who is entering law school in September.

The proof, of course, will be in the pudding of my law exam performance, but this book was hands down the most helpful and pragmatic guide to analyzing complex information. I'm so glad I read the book in preparation for beginning law school. Thank you!!

I read this book about a week before I started my 1L year. I am two weeks in now, and I think that the book definitely is giving me an advantage in issue spotting and a better general understanding as to what I am supposed to be taking from casebook reading.

Good read when you have nothing on your plate and have time to digest the material

I am a law professor at the oldest night law school in San Francisco who has struggled for years to communicate to my stdents how to prepare for exams. I wish someone had told me about this book years ago. It explains cogently and distinctly why law school exams are different than those exams you did so well on in college (or you wouldn't be in law school) and why you need to start thinking differently. The book goes through the different types of questions one mught find on an exam and shows how to address them. It also provides numerous tips on how to study and how to approach exam writing. The book also does a great job of explaining a theme I have pushed for years --- that exam-writing skills are really the writing and thinking skills students will need when they become lawyers. It should be required reading in law schools. And it wouldn't hurt law professors to read the book either.

Obviously, I do not exactly know what to expect or if what I have read so far in this book will make a difference on law school exams. Why? because I haven't even started law school yet! However, in light of what I have been told, and what I have researched about law school, I believe this book contains really useful advice.I have interviewed 1Ls, 2Ls and practicing lawyers on law school and the practice of law. One thing they all bring up is how ambiguous the law is, and how in law school, most students are lost because they do not know how best to organize law courses effectively. This is especially the case for students who approach law school like undergraduate work. i.e.,

Knowledge test. In my opinion this book does a good job of explaining the legal perspective and how it's not so much about the answer you give to a legal question/issue, as it is about how you argue your point (on both sides) to arrive at an answer (or no answer). What I have appreciated so far is that this book does not necessarily prescribe exact tools for legal analysis and/or argument. Most of the book (Part 1 and 2) focuses on "the ambiguity" in the law, and where this ambiguity comes from. I had to pause and think about the phrase "No vehicles permitted in the park". What does "vehicle" cover? Does it include tricycles -- technically yes, however, was that the purpose of the law? Why bother about purpose.. is that relevant, and if so, how? and it goes on and on... For now, I plan to focus on Part 1 and 2 more-so than Part 3. Especially on the chapters discussing "forks in the law" and "forks in the facts" -- fascinating stuff. I think this will get me in the right frame of mind for law school. Pick up this book if you are about to start law school (like me), or if you are already there. Interestingly, I arrived at this book by reading comments from the authors of Planet law school and another highly reputable law school book -- both recommended this book for 1Ls. I agreed and bought this book instead of theirs. ha!

I think this book is overrated. Its value is really overblown across the various internet forums devoted to law school, and I feel that the lessons it teaches are narrowly applicable and may lead the unwary student into trouble with professors who are trying to teach their students to think a certain way, or prefer certain arguments over others. In any case, the ideas should be self-evident to the law student; but if you are not a good writer and have trouble organizing your thoughts quickly it may be helpful. I found that my professors' personal idiosyncrasies and testing styles made this book largely irrelevant to my exams. The book may be helpful if your professor teaches the course in the "classic" Socratic way and gives the "classic," pure issue-spotter exam. I think both of these are becoming less and less common across the board. But if you are a ball of anxiety, and you need something to help you sleep at night, this might be a cheap and effective palliative.

This book helps new law students learn why lawyers think as they do and provides a prospective as to why things are usually never totally one way or the other.

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