

# PERSPECTIVES

## Teaching Legal Research and Writing

VOL. 8

NO. 1

FALL

1999

### TEN MAGIC TRICKS FOR AN INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM<sup>1</sup>

BY LESLIE LARKIN COONEY AND JUDITH KARP

*Leslie Larkin Cooney is an Associate Professor and Judith Karp is an Assistant Professor at Nova Southeastern University School of Law in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Both work in the Lawyering Skills and Values Program. At NSU, the lawyering skills program is a two-year, 12-credit sequence integrating practice, professionalism, and technology. The first-year program combines instruction in legal research, writing, and analysis with other skills such as interviewing, counseling, negotiation, and pretrial practice. Students in the upper-level program elect a transactional track or a litigation track.*

Educators have found that active and collaborative teaching methods can be far more successful than those that are teacher-centered. Professors who teach legal skills, including the skills of research and writing, have been at the forefront in legal education in adopting these teaching methods, which include "learn by doing." Students benefit from the "learn by doing" approach because it forces them to take an active role in the learning process and encourages them to learn from each other. With the students, rather than the professor, as the center of attention in the class, the professor can better facilitate the learning process. Although the most obvious application of "learn by doing" is to provide simulations for our students, legal skills professors need not limit themselves to simulations in order to take advantage of the benefits of this teaching method. The following interactive exercises have been used successfully in

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of material presented by the authors at the Central Region LRW/Lawyering Skills Conference, "Hands-On: Teaching LRW and Lawyering Skills in the First Year," held in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 24-25, 1999.

the legal skills classes of the Lawyering Skills and Values Program at Nova Southeastern University School of Law. We have found that these exercises can be adapted to a variety of topics and levels of training.

#### 1. Piecing It Together

Through this group exercise, students learn that legal writing is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Students are given sentences of a paragraph, or portions of a memorandum, client

### C O N T E N T S

Ten Magic Tricks for an Interactive Classroom <i>Leslie Larkin Cooney and Judith Karp</i> .....	1
Establishing and Maintaining Good Working Relationships with 1L Writing Students <i>Mary Dunnewold</i> .....	4
BRUTAL CHOICES IN CURRICULAR DESIGN ... Why Don't We Teach Secondary Materials First? <i>Penny A. Hazelton</i> .....	8
Why We Should Teach Primary Materials First <i>Donald J. Dunn</i> .....	10
TEACHABLE MOMENTS FOR TEACHERS ... Teaching Paragraphs <i>Louis J. Sirico, Jr.</i> .....	13
There's a New Test in Town: Preparing Students for the MPT <i>Nancy L. Schultz</i> .....	14
Holding a Citation Carnival <i>Terry Jean Seligmann</i> .....	18
High-Tech Law Students: When to Train Them on CALR <i>Fritz Snyder</i> .....	21
WRITING TIPS ... Never Use a Preposition to End a Sentence With <i>Martha Faulk</i> .....	24
Nonlegal Analogies in the LRW Classroom <i>Bruce Ching</i> .....	26
HOW TO .... Structure Your Legal Memorandum <i>Mark Gannage</i> .....	30
Legal Research and Writing Resources: Recent Publications <i>Donald J. Dunn</i> .....	34
Cumulative Index for Volumes 1-7 <i>Frank G. Houdek</i> .....	37

**PERSPECTIVES: Teaching Legal Research and Writing**

is published in the fall, winter, and spring of each year by West Group

Frank Houdek

Editor

Southern Illinois University  
School of Law  
Carbondale, Illinois

**Editorial Board**

Barbara A. Bintliff  
University of Colorado  
School of Law Library  
Boulder, Colorado

Ellen M. Callinan  
Crowell & Moring  
Washington, D.C.

Donald J. Dunn  
Western New England College  
School of Law Library  
Springfield, Massachusetts

Penny A. Hazelton  
University of Washington  
School of Law Library  
Seattle, Washington

Mary S. Lawrence  
University of Oregon School of Law  
Eugene, Oregon

Kathleen H. McManus  
Marquette University Law School  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Judith Meadows  
State Law Library of Montana  
Helena, Montana

Helene S. Shapo  
Northwestern University  
School of Law  
Chicago, Illinois

Christopher Simoni  
Northwestern University  
School of Law Library  
Chicago, Illinois

Louis Sirico  
Villanova University School of Law  
Villanova, Pennsylvania

Kay Todd  
Paul Hastings Janofsky & Walker  
Atlanta, Georgia

*Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Editor, the Editorial Board or West Group. Readers are encouraged to submit brief articles on subjects relevant to the teaching of legal research and writing. Manuscripts, comments, and correspondence should be sent to Frank Houdek, Southern Illinois University School of Law, Mail Code 6803, Carbondale, IL 62901-6803, (618) 453-8788, Fax: (618) 453-8728, E-mail: houdek@siu.edu*

To subscribe to PERSPECTIVES, use the card on the back cover of this issue or write or call:

Beckie Burmeister

West Group

Product and Client Communications

D5-C E12-04

610 Opperman Drive

Eagan, MN 55123

(651) 687-5702

letter, or other writing and are required to organize them in a coherent fashion. If all the pieces of a writing are organized in their proper order, a clear picture appears to the reader.

## 2. What's My Line

Students are divided into pairs to interview each other as if they were applying for a job position with the class law firm. Each student then writes a paragraph about the interviewed "applicant," introducing the individual to the hiring committee (the entire class). If time permits, each student orally introduces the applicant to the class. The paragraphs are then reproduced in a class "firm brochure."

## 3. Conjunction Junction

Hand out a multiple-choice test on grammar and punctuation questions. (Questions are readily available in English grammar texts or SAT preparation materials.) Divide the students into teams and have the teams complete the test. Each team must choose only one answer per question. As moderator, you call seriatim on teams for correct answers. The team with the most points wins. You might also award points for enthusiasm and bonus points for any team that can sing the song "Conjunction Junction."

## 4. Face-Off

Class is divided into two groups, representing opposing parties, and groups are then subdivided into groups of four, which are required to either write an outline of an argument or write a persuasive IRAC. For example, in the criminal case of *The Three Bears v. Goldilocks*, Goldilocks is charged with burglary. Each subgroup is given the elements of burglary and is required to write either an outline of an argument or a persuasive IRAC using the facts in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. One student from each group then argues the group's position against a member from an opposing group.

## 5. Who Wants to Be a Lawyer?

Based on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Divide your students into teams and have them write five multiple-choice questions based on the reading assignment for the day's class. Teams have 15 minutes in which to write questions of varying difficulty. Teams rate their questions as easy,

average, or difficult. Have team members list their names and submit questions and answers. (You may also want to come to class with a bank of your own questions to ensure coverage of any particular part of the material.) Then play the game in the same class. Begin by asking the contestant easier questions and then gradually increasing the level of difficulty. (You may want to use teams instead of individuals as contestants in particularly large classes.) Omit questions that the contestant has authored. Permit the use of lifelines: "ask the class"; "phone (ask) a friend."

## 6. Team Feud

Student groups draft a complaint based on a given set of facts. The groups then exchange complaints and are required to draft answers to the complaints they received. This can be done in a class period using a simple set of facts and one count.

## 7. The Cite Is Right

This is a takeoff of the television game show *The Price Is Right*, in which participants are asked to guess which product is marked with the correct price. In the legal writing version, the class is divided into color-coded teams. The object of the game is to be the first team to pick the correct citation from a group of three citations that are written on cue cards (or are projected on an overhead projector). Teams have the opportunity to gain double points if they can identify applicable *Bluebook* rules.

## 8. Updating Game

Students are divided into teams and each team is given a different case (and/or statute) to update using the print version of *Shepard's® Citations*. Each team is given a series of questions to answer concerning the result of its Shepardizing™. Teams must list the names and volumes of each Shepard's source consulted as well as results. Teams are given a set time (15 minutes) and are encouraged to "beat the clock," if possible. The professor is available for consultation during this time. Teams report back to class and debrief the rest of the class on how and what they accomplished.

## 9. Name That Error

Take the discussion section from a well-

.....

written student office memo from a previous year. Edit the memo to include the 20 to 25 most common student errors that drive you crazy. Consecutively number the sentences in which the errors appear. Divide the class into teams. Have the teams discuss what they believe the errors to be. Reconvene the class. Call on each team for a different number. If the team properly identifies and corrects the error, award a point to the team. The team with the most points may win, but you are the real winner if you can eliminate some of your most dreaded student errors.

### 10. Prof for a Day

At the beginning of the semester, students sign up to make a “research presentation” at a later date in the semester. Presentation topics may include such things as researching state digests, Shepardizing state cases, researching state statutes, conducting federal research, researching secondary sources, and using ALR. Scatter the presentation dates later in the semester. Student groups create a presentation to teach the class how to solve a hypothetical problem using the assigned sources. The professor should meet with each team before the date of the presentation to coordinate content and should require each team member to be a part of the presentation. The teams then get to be the “Prof for a Day” and present to the class. Groups may use different mediums, including videotaping and PowerPoint presentations.

### Conclusion

We hope these “10 Magic Tricks for an Interactive Classroom” will give you ideas for creating active and collaborative exercises for your classes. Anyone wanting more information can contact the authors at Nova Southeastern University School of Law, 3305 College Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL, 33314, phone: (954) 262-6100, e-mail: [KarpJ@nsu.law.nova.edu](mailto:KarpJ@nsu.law.nova.edu); [CooneyL@nsu.law.nova.edu](mailto:CooneyL@nsu.law.nova.edu).

© 1999 Leslie Larkin Cooney and Judith Karp

“[A]ctive and collaborative teaching methods can be far more successful than those that are teacher-centered.”