

# Dear Tiffany:

## Here's how you can succeed in law school

President Trump's youngest daughter is the first first-daughter to enter law school while her father is in the White House, so we've put together a primer to help her get started.

**By Katie Thisdell**

Welcome to law school, Tiffany Trump.

The next three years will not be easy. Every law student encounters challenges, and despite your last name, we expect you'll be no different.

You may be embarrassed when answering a question incorrectly in class. Everyone is at some point. (Of course, your classmates may tweet about it.)

You may feel like you're drowning in the heavy workload. There are ways to stay on pace. (Maybe your Secret Service detail can help you stick to a schedule?)

And, you're going to be stressed. Very stressed. Don't forget to take care of yourself. (We'll know if you're having fun outside law school just by checking your Instagram account.)

Your first-year grades play a dispropor-

tionately large role in your future job offers, so you'll want to do your best. To help you and your fellow classmates at Georgetown University Law Center and at schools across the country, we've compiled advice from experts. They share tips on how to start off strong and excel during your first year.

And, don't worry too much about your father. Hopefully, your classmates will judge you on who you are, and not on the president's approval ratings.

"My experience teaching law students is, they're very nice people, so I think she'll actually have a great time in law school," said Andrew McClurg, a professor at The University of Memphis – Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law and author of "1L of a Ride: A Well-traveled Professor's Roadmap to Success in the First Year of Law School."

"It all depends on Tiffany herself," he said. "Everything I've read about her is she's a very well-grounded person and she's not a spotlight seeker, so it depends on how she handles herself."

### Settling in

Have you figured out where you're going to live? Don't expect to crash at your dad's house or couch surf for the first few weeks.

Having everything in your personal life taken care of can make life easier, said Alison Monahan, creator of *The Girl's Guide to Law School* and *Law School Toolbox*. That includes everything from furnishing your apartment and updat-

ing your laptop to stocking your cupboards and setting up Amazon's subscribe and save for recurring purchases.

"The less time you have to spend on these things during the semester, the better," said Monahan, a 2006 graduate of Columbia Law School.

Your time is best spent on what's important for these next three years.

Gone are the syllabus-reading days of undergrad. Even before your first day of

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class, professors are going to require you to have done work.

“I think one of the things that’s most surprising for people is that you just jump right in,” Monahan said. “You’re going to have cases to read even before you get to that first class, and that first class is a real class. That can be shocking for people.”

### In the classroom

And then there’s the style of teaching: The dreaded Socratic method. It might seem like torture, but professors say it will develop critical thinking skills so that future lawyers will approach the law as intellectuals.

Law students have to get used to justifying why they believe something is right or wrong, said Nancy Rapoport, author of “Law School Survival Manual: From LSAT to Bar Exam” and a professor at

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law.

“We’re not doing it to humiliate them,” Rapoport said. “We’re really, really, really not. We’re doing it because if they draw bad conclusions, they’re going to give bad advice to their clients.”

She remembers being terrified when professors called on her at Stanford University Law School. But over time, it got easier.

“They should prepare to be uncomfortable, and they should prepare to get things wrong, and that is OK,” she said. “No one has ever, ever died from being wrong in class.”

After a few classes, you might start to pick up on what certain professors like to ask about. Think about those things while doing your reading.

You can also try practicing with friends. Ask questions of each other, and try to reason out your answer the way your professor would expect you to.

### Reading and studying

For the most part, Tiffany, you’ll have the same educational experience as all of your classmates.

“There’s no two ways about it. I’d give her the same advice I’d give anyone else,” Rapoport said. “She needs to do the readings. There are not any situations where she could cram.”

Establishing good habits now can help you succeed later.

“As with any new endeavor, much of the challenge lies in developing a routine that works for you,” says Georgetown Law’s first-year student guide. “Although the demands of the classroom do not decrease in later years, having an established routine and a solid educational foundation from the first year make these years more manageable.”

Block out time when you’re fresh and alert. For some students it’s mornings; for others it’s evenings; and for some, weekends are best.

It’s also important to find a place where you’re able to focus. It may be a study carrel in the library, a desk in your

apartment or a table at a coffee shop.

Perhaps most important: Turn off your phone, and avoid Facebook and Instagram.

“This is hard for people, because we’re so used to being distracted,” Monahan said.

Do you have to read every single word you’re assigned? Not necessarily. Do it to the best of your ability, and focus on the main body of text.

It may help to figure out what kind of learner you are. If you’re unsure, your law school or university should have resources to help you.

As a visual and kinetic learner, Rapoport found that outlining helped her retain information. Every weekend, she would add the week’s new material and then review prior weeks’ outlines. Because she was constantly reviewing her notes, she didn’t have to cram for exams and could just practice for them.

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Don’t think you can just get outlines from someone else. It’s the act of outlining that makes it a good study tool.

You should also work at your most efficient level, advises McClurg. Prepare for every class, but don’t over-prepare.

He says many students will put a disproportionate amount of time into their studies at the start of the semester, and then burn themselves out and be unable to keep up.

“That’s the absolute most crucial piece of advice: Don’t fall behind,” McClurg said. “You cannot catch up in law school. It literally is not possible. There are no breaks, and the workload keeps mounting and mounting.”

## Friends and study groups

Find your people. Getting to know people and developing allies in law school can be a trial-and-error process, as Monahan found out.

“It’s always a little hard as a grown-up to find friends,” she said.

This starts with something that seems simple enough: finding people who are kind and who make you feel better about yourself, life and school.

You may end up surprised.

“People who looked terrible on paper turned out to be great friends and allies,” Monahan writes on *The Girl’s Guide to Law School*. “Classmates whose political views make my blood curdle ended up being my people. You never know, so it pays to keep an open mind.”

Tiffany, your Secret Service detail could pose another obstacle to making friends. Maybe you can see if they’ll back off, just a little?

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Cliques form early, whether they be of the academic study group variety or social support networks. You need to start looking for friends quickly so you’re not shut out of these groups.

“I think it’s important for her classmates to understand she’s her own person,” Rapoport said about Tiffany. “She’s not her family, and she’s experiencing the same law school they’re experiencing, and they should be kind to her.”

You never know where your classmates will end up in 30 years, or who and what they’ll remember.

Joining study groups is popular, and there can be a lot of pressure to join one. But it should be an individual decision. If you learn best by discussing ideas, then go for it. If you prefer reading in a quiet room, a study group may not be the best use of your time.

Be clear with yourself about what’s going to be helpful.

“Make sure the people you’re with approach things the same way you do,” Rapoport said.

Some groups may want to meet once a week; others may want to meet four times a week. Some may want to do a lot of practice exams; others may want to have more discussions. The one that is a waste of time? The group that gossips.

Pay attention to the students in your classes to figure out who has strengths in which areas. You can use this to your advantage when trying to form a study group, or you can find a study partner for a specific class.

## Stress relief

Law school can’t be all work and no play.

It may seem counterintuitive, but taking some scheduled time off will help you focus better when you’re studying.

You’ve probably heard it before: Exercise, eat well, get enough sleep. There’s a reason the experts always stress these healthy habits: They work. If you burn out, you’ll get sick, and then you’ll fall behind. Then, it becomes close to impossible to catch up.

McClurg, who devotes a chapter in his book to maintaining well-being, also advises readers to be careful about alcohol abuse, which is prevalent among law students and lawyers. Get help if you need it.

And keep your hobby. Maybe it’s hiking, or disc golf, or playing guitar, or getting regular manicures.

“Get serious about your self-care, whatever that means for you,” Monahan said. “Whatever it is, it’s valid, but be intentional about how you’re spending your time.” ■

## What to expect in your first semester



### September

Your first few weeks of law school will be a blur, said Andrew McClurg, author of *1L of a Ride: A Well-traveled Professor’s Roadmap to Success in the First Year of Law School*.

Make sure you go to all your classes, and get there on time. Be prepared to feel overwhelmed.

“The flow of a law school class is that we’re more strict at the beginning, then professors get more easygoing as the semester goes on,” McClurg said. “It’s impossible to go the other way. You can’t start off nice, then turn into a badass.”



### October

Your classwork is probably starting to speed up now, with harder material being covered faster than before.

Your legal writing assignments are also going to consume a lot more time than you expected. Don’t procrastinate.

Between seven and 10 weeks, you’ll likely hit a wall. McClurg says you’ll feel as if you’ve been run over by a steamroller. Professors don’t give you much feedback, and if they do, it’s not all positive. It’s important to fight through this.

“Remember, this too shall pass,” he said. “Take it day by day. It’s a marathon, not a sprint.”



### November

Consistency in your schoolwork will help set you apart from your classmates as the end of the semester nears. Keep reading, briefing and outlining.

Don’t be pressured to participate in a lot of extra activities. Stay focused on studies, because first-year grades are disproportionately important. Activities will still be there in your second and third years.

Now’s the time to start thinking about your future. Meet with a career counselor to plan out your summer and beyond, and develop a legal resume.



### December

You can start applying for summer legal jobs, but first concentrate on exams. Since doing well in your classes is of the utmost importance, you may consider waiting until after finals to begin your job search, recommends the National Association for Law Placement.

