



The view from here – an interview with articling and LPP students

LAWPRO articling students Madeleine Tyber and Anne Laverty and LPP student Jennifer Lillie share advice and insights for law students looking ahead.

Be confident

Buzz among law students is that they don't know anything when it comes to articling and that they will face a steep learning curve. This is one of the rumors that worried Anne before she started at LAWPRO: "I was happily surprised to learn that I was more prepared from law school than I had thought. I found that I can rely on what I learned in law school in combination with my job training. You have to trust that law school teaches you to be successful at articling and in your career." Madeleine agrees, and said that if there was one piece of advice she could go back and give herself at the beginning of her articling term it would be to be more confident. After handing in her first assignment she received feedback that she was too hesitant and was clearly stuck between saying what she really thought and giving a conservative answer. "I think that it's normal to be intimidated when you start articling and doing work for real clients, but you should remind yourself that you are here for a reason and trust your knowledge and instincts."

Ask for help

All three students agreed that it is important to ask for help during your time at law school and during articling. The students all found their career services offices to be a valuable source of information, from mock interview apps or events, connecting with past articling students, or helping decide what practice area is right. The students agreed that the career services offices at their schools were a great place to look for help and the earlier you make a connection with them the more they will be able to help you when you really need it.

Both Anne and Madeleine have been surprised how friendly and willing to help everyone has been at LAWPRO. "It surprised me that I could ask anyone a question, not just my principal – every lawyer and staff member was always happy to help," said Anne. Madeleine also encourages students to stay in touch with their law school friends once they start articling. "It is beneficial to you in your career and personally to have those people to talk to and share your experiences with. You can talk to people who haven't gone through it, but they don't have the same understanding and empathy."

Find what works for you

The transition from academic life into the working world can be difficult for many students. Jennifer shared that the LPP program was a great stepping stone between law school classes and real articling work: "It gave me a chance to gain experience with practical work without having real clients right away. I was able to increase my confidence without worrying about the impact on a real person and now I feel much more prepared."

All three students agreed that there are many habits that can help you feel more organized, such as checking your email first thing in the morning and making daily lists to prioritize important assignments. Anne shared one thing that she does every day that helps her maintain her focus and productivity: "I always make sure to leave the office at lunchtime to walk around and take a mental break. If I do that, I come back after lunch and, as cliché as it sounds, I am reenergized and refocused to get back to work."

Adapting to office work

All three students agreed that learning how to research and write outside of the classroom has been an adjustment. "One of the most challenging things when you are assigned a research question is knowing when to stop. I would put off handing in an assignment because I would want to do one last check on it, then I would do one last check and find something and open up a whole new area of research, said Madeleine. I think a lot of lawyers struggle with this and especially when you are just starting out, it is hard to know when you are finished." The students agreed that when you are unsure if your research is sufficient it is best to speak to whoever assigned the work and explain what information you have so far and ask them if they think it is sufficient or if there is anywhere they would recommend you look for more information. Jennifer added that when writing out of the classroom you need to focus on the question or the use of the information versus your own education. You have to learn to be concise – there is no need to explain everything you learned in your research if it is not relevant to the answer. ■