



How I was able to Easily Memorise Legal Authorities for Bar Finals

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As of the beginning of third term, I had never drafted a full charge sheet, either in class or during my personal reading.

I simply didn't grasp the concept very well and it all just seemed confusing.

Nonetheless, by exam time, I was fully up to speed and I'm quite certain that my criminal law result is likely to be one of my highest.

There were many reasons for this, ranging from the spectacular revision lessons by the criminal lawyers (shamelessly plagiarizing Mr Kanu's joke here) teaching us, great friends and study colleagues and divine grace, but my decision to begin using flashcards was a major part as well.

Before starting law school, I had no idea what digital flashcards were, nor the science behind them which makes them work so well. If that's you, don't worry there's enough time for you to learn, understand and implement flashcard use effectively to succeed in law school.

Olamide [has an article that explains how flashcards work](#) but in summary, they leverage on a concept called spaced repetition which trains you to memorize information and practice retrieving it regularly.

Several studies have shown that it's the best way of committing information to memory effectively. This is because it increases your brain's familiarity with the material and helps you cement it in your long-term memory. This is better than other methods such as cramming which only keep information in your short-term memory.

To clarify "yes, the technique is for memorizing information. I realize that many people equate memorization with cramming, but that's not true.

In law school, understanding and applying principles effectively is crucial, but being able to immediately recall your drafts, statutory provisions, cases etc. is crucial, and that's where spaced repetition shines.

There are many apps which allow you to use spaced repetition (technically "or not so technically actually "you can even use paper), but [Anki](#) is the best, in my experience.

Here are a few tips to help you maximize your benefits.

Start Early and Practice Regularly

Spaced repetition works by prompting your brain to retrieve information at increasing intervals over time. The more time you spend practicing, the more you'll remember, simple.

Also, if you're not consistent, it'll defeat the purpose and even harm you.

If you fail to practice for long enough that something has left your memory completely, you'll need to start afresh and that would slow down the process significantly. There's a lot to learn in law school "you really can't afford to lose any time.

I used Anki on my phone and laptop. The phone was for during the day when I was engaged in other activities and wanted to take advantage of any spare time that came up "waiting for the lecturers, break, chilling at the restaurant etc.

I eventually stopped using my phone completely about a month to exams because it was easier to shut off distractions on my laptop. Whichever one you choose, discipline is going to be key so you don't end up spending half your time surfing the internet instead of reviewing flashcards.

Another reason why you should start using Anki early is so you can decide if it's working for you.

I think spaced repetition is awesome. It worked spectacularly for me and I am currently using it to learn some other things. Iâ€™ll definitely use it academically again too.

The thing is, however, nothing works the same way for everyone. Download the app, practice with it and see how things go for a week, then you can decide if itâ€™s effective and continue or stop, if itâ€™s not.

Learn before you Memorize

Spaced repetition/Anki is not designed for you to learn new concepts. Itâ€™s focused on memory and trying to mix the two together can be problematic. Anki randomizes cards so your brain has to do more work to find information, instead of just rote memorization where you can predict whatâ€™s coming next.

To use Anki effectively, be sure to study whatever concepts youâ€™re trying to learn in-depth before creating and reviewing cards in the app.

For instance, if youâ€™re trying to learn recovery of premises, you should use a textbook, your class notes and any other resources to study the topic and understand the concept and the principles across the various jurisdictions.

Once that is done, you should then identify the core aspects which you need to memorize and use Anki to create your cards and begin reviewing them.

This way, youâ€™ll have a solid foundation in the topic and Anki will just help to ensure you donâ€™t forget, plus you can use Anki to learn related cases and statutory provisions.

Use the Basic Card Format

The last tip here is to keep it simple. Anki has been getting a lot of features of recent and it can now do a wide range of things. All of them are very helpful but not particularly relevant to a law student, in my opinion.

For instance, Iâ€™m learning french now and Ankiâ€™s ability to attach images and voice notes to files is helping me a lot, but you really donâ€™t need those for law school and itâ€™s easy to get bogged down trying to find the perfect system.

The basic card format is that thereâ€™s a prompt on one side and the answer on the other. Itâ€™s basic but very versatile. I used it to learn cases by having the name of the case as the prompt and the facts/principle as the answer.

Sometimes I had the facts or principle as the prompt and the name as the answer. For drafts, I had the name of the section (e.g testatum for sale of land) as the prompt and the draft as the answer. Same thing for principles, lists (e.g contents of a search report), statutes (e.g sections for police bail) and every other thing I needed to memorize.

Create, Review and Revise

Iâ€™m going to share the decks (collections of flashcards) I used for each course in law school, but I encourage you very strongly to create your own cards as well and add them to the decks. You can get the decks [here](#).

When you spend the time to study a topic, identify the most cogent aspects and then create cards for them, it helps to internalize the material very effectively, making your review sessions more effective and even helping you remember in the exams.

Youâ€™ll be able to recall what you were thinking about a particular topic and the questions you set, in addition to the benefits of reviewing the cards consistently over time. â€œ When you spend time creating your own cards.

Also, your cards arenâ€™t sacred and you shouldnâ€™t be afraid to edit them over time. You can delete ones that you deem unnecessary and update others with new information you come across as you study. You can get the links to my decks here:

Discipline and Commitment

I started using Anki quite late, but I can say that I used it a lot. Every chance I got during the day and at night, awake, standing and peering at my laptop which I placed on my bunk. It was stressful, but immensely helpful and if I had to change anything, Iâ€™d only begin using Anki earlier.

The effectiveness of spaced repetition will depend on how consistent you are so if you wonâ€™t be consistent, perhaps just leave it and stick to conventional study methods, although those would require consistency too.

On discipline â€œ Iâ€™ll share this story: About a month before exams, my phone was seized by a lecturer because I was out of class.

I was vexed and disturbed at the thought of being â€œcut-offâ€ but while studying at night I discovered I was able to concentrate better since there was no phone to â€œquickly check Twitterâ€ or â€œsharply post this witty thought on Whatsappâ€.

Iâ€™m a very social person and it was quite difficult but I discovered that with no calls, notifications or any other distraction, I studied very effectively. The next day, I wrote an email to the lecturer asking him to kindly keep the phone

till after exams instead of returning it after a week as was customary.

Iâ€™d say that was one of the best decisions I made throughout law school and in my life.

If you want to succeed in law school whether using Anki or not, youâ€™ll need to decide how bad you want it and what youâ€™re willing to sacrifice