A. Receiving The Assignment

1. ALWAYS COME PREPARED (with a paper/pen), EXHIBIT ENTHUSIASM & TAKE GREAT NOTES.

2. ASK QUESTIONS. Make sure you understand the nature of the assignment, how it fits into the larger picture of the client's problem and why it matters, goals, time frames, and other administrative details before you leave the office. Find out: When is the assignment due? Who else in the office knows about the project/issue? What format should the finished product be in, and how is the work product likely to be used? How much time should you spend? Who is the client and how should they be billed? Can the assigning attorney recommend a research strategy? Is there a good starting place for the requested research - a certain secondary source, relevant statute? Are there terms of art, acronyms of which you should be aware? What are the assigning attorney's and/or client's unique preferences for the finished product, both substantively and stylistically? Try not to leave any rules or expectations unspoken.

B. Research

1. THINK ABOUT THE PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BEFORE PLUNGING INTO RESEARCH.

2. DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL. Ask for prior memos, research files, forms, templates or other "go-bys" that may help you. Reviewing high quality work product can help you understand the end-goal and give you a feel for the appropriate voice. That said, do not rely solely on the sample provided, as this may result in stale or inaccurate work product.

3. UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR EMPLOYER IS BILLED FOR FEE-BASED SOURCES AND DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY ACCORDINGLY. Don’t rely exclusively on computer research, and don’t overlook such “free” resources as Corpus Juris Secundum and American Jurisprudence to compliment your understanding of the subject matter. Before signing on to Lexis/Westlaw, make sure you understand the issue to be answered, the jurisdictions on which to focus, and obtain an estimate of how much time to spend researching online.

4. DON’T FORGET TO CHECK POCKET PARTS OR LOOK AT THE DATE THROUGH WHICH ONLINE SOURCES HAVE BEEN UPDATED.

5. RESEARCH WITH THE GOAL OF FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE CLIENT’S PROBLEM IN THE FOREFRONT OF YOUR MIND.

6. CHECK BACK WITH THE ASSIGNING ATTORNEY PERIODICALLY WITH UPDATES, PROGRESS MADE AS YOU WORK. After you’ve worked on a project for some time, call or email the assigning attorney to explain where things stand and what questions remain. Communicating at this stage will help you focus your thoughts, ensure you are on track to provide the attorney exactly what he/she wants, and prevent you from drowning in the details of their research.
C. **Written Work**

1. **MEET THE DEADLINE WITH TIME TO SPARE.** Even the best memorandum of the summer leaves a bad impression if it's turned in late.

2. **NEVER TURN IN A PRELIMINARY VERSION OF A WORK IN PROGRESS.** The supervising attorney likely will not appreciate reading serial drafts, and (despite # 1 above) it's always better to be little late than to be wrong.

3. **REALIZE THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A DRAFT.** Write from an outline, and make sure your written product is perfect and complete. The job of the assigning attorney is to take your best work and make it even better.

4. **SUMMARIZE YOUR CONCLUSIONS UP FRONT.** Whether you’re writing a research memo, an opinion letter, or a brief, you’ll need an up-front summary. That typically consists of three things: the questions, the answers to those questions, and the reasons for the answers. Don’t delay the conclusion until the end of the memo on the assumption that the reader will read all the way through the memo immediately.

5. **MAKE YOUR SUMMARY UNDERSTANDABLE TO OUTSIDERS.** It’s not enough to summarize. You must summarize in a way that every conceivable reader—not just the assigning lawyer—can understand. You’ll look like a more capable writer when you consider your secondary as well as your primary audience. In addition, hiring decisions are often made, at least in part, by committees that review writing samples—and those committees—may have no knowledge of the original assignment.

6. **AVOID THE BIG THREE.** Avoid work product that is wordy, passive and/or abstract. Ensure that your work offers practical analysis of the question at hand in persuasive prose.

7. **TAKE A STAND.** When drafting memos and letters, remember that the attorneys need you to help solve a problem, skirt an obstacle or change someone's mind. Every word should be geared toward one of those goals. Be careful, thoughtful and no more sweeping than the law allows, but give an answer.

8. **INCLUDE HIGHLIGHTED/FLAGGED COPIES OF ANY PARTICULARLY CRITICAL CASES/STATUTES WHICH FORM THE BASIS OF YOUR ANSWER.**

D. **After Turning It In**

1. **BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS YOUR WRITTEN WORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLIENT.**

2. **CIRCLE BACK.** After you've turned in a project, check in to make sure you provided the attorney what he/she wanted and volunteer to help out with any follow up work/research that is needed. Also, when seeking feedback, take it seriously without being defensive. Doing so will help you stand out this summer and beyond.