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# Top 5 Summer Tips: Dos and Don'ts for the Summer

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This practice note outlines five practical tips you can use as a summer associate to help you figure out what to do—and what not to do—over the summer.

You've made it. You slogged through your first two years of law school, learned “how to think like a lawyer,” and charmed interviewers at on-campus recruiting and call-backs last summer with your winning personality, drive, and intelligence. You have your offer to join the summer associate class of your dream law firm and are ready for a fantastic summer. But walking in that first day, you are a bundle of nerves and excitement. How can you ensure that the summer associate experience is fruitful and will turn into a permanent job? What are the full-time associates and partners thinking, and how can you impress them? What are your summer associate classmates going to be like? How can you make sure that all of your hard work over the years pays off? The following tips (“dos” and “don'ts” gleaned from our many years of running a summer associate program) will help you make a good impression at your firm this summer and have the best chance for a permanent job offer.

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## ***Dos for the Summer***

### **1. Do dig in.**

You will be asked to take on real projects that matter to real clients. The assignment could be critical to the case or deal, or minor in its importance, but either way this is your opportunity to impress your client (and in many cases, your real client here is the other attorneys working on the team). Immerse yourself in your assignments. Show that you are committed to the task and care about its accuracy and value to the attorney team. Check and double-check your work. For better or worse, first impressions matter, and summer associate assignments are a great way to demonstrate that you are committed, intelligent, and driven.

### **2. Do soak it in.**

Look around you and talk to associates and partners about what they do. Ask for opportunities to “shadow” attorneys during client calls or at depositions or in the courtroom. Find out what they like about their particular practice groups. You are likely to learn about areas of the law you never knew existed or did not expect to find so interesting.

### **3. Do make connections.**

The other law students in your summer associate class will be your peers and teammates for many years. Get to know them. They may become your partners or will go on to do other great things. Some day they may even become your clients.

### **4. Do ask questions.**

The summer program is a time to learn. No one expects a law student to have much or any substantive knowledge about the issues they will be dealing with on a day to day basis as a junior associate. So, it can't hurt, and can only help, to ask questions. Don't pretend you know what you are doing. Asking questions will help you learn and grow and shows that you are conscientious and interested in doing a good job.

### **5. Do stand out—for the right reasons.**

Most attorneys have very low expectations of summer associates. After all, you've never worked in a law firm before. So, where you can impress people is by having a can-do attitude. Be positive, appear eager to work long hours, be well organized, show up for meetings with a legal pad and a big smile on your face, and be highly focused on your task at hand. You are there to make the other attorneys' jobs easier. Do everything you can to do just that.

## ***Don'ts for the Summer***

### **1. Don't act entitled.**

There are very few people on the planet who have the opportunity to receive the education you have received or to work for an elite law firm. And on top of all the interesting, substantive work you will get to do, there also will be more food, drinks, and events than you've likely ever experienced in your life. You should be appreciative of all of those things, so make sure to act like it. Thanking attorneys and support staff for the opportunities will send the right message; demanding the lobster special or critiquing the wait staff will not.



## 2. Don't overindulge.

You've been to college and know how much is too much. Never get to the point at a firm event where you are out of control or won't remember what you said. This is not a college frat party or a law school pub—there are real adult attorneys at these events and there is no doubt that a sloppy drunken summer associate will be remembered the next day. Have fun, be social, but be mindful and respectful of your surroundings.

## 3. Don't assume you have an offer.

The law firm recruiting market is strong right now. But that can change in a heartbeat. Do not assume that everyone will get an offer. Instead, work to prove that you are deserving of one.

## 4. Don't stand out—for the wrong reasons.

Don't be that summer associate that people wind up talking about years later. Don't fall asleep during a meeting, don't show up disheveled, don't be crass, don't be rude, and don't drink too much at the firm events. These impressions matter.

## 5. Don't worry too much.

All the things that got you here—your hard work, dedication, intellect, focus, and determination—will serve you well during your summer associate experience. Be yourself and take to heart the do's and don'ts outlined above and you will be sure to have an incredible summer.



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