

Fresno City College
Paralegal Studies Program
Business Division
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TOP 100 OF THE NATION

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Since 1989 the FCC Paralegal Studies Program has offered exemplary training for California paralegals. The program offers both a certification program and an A.S. Degree which fulfill the requirements of California Business and Professions Code § 6450 et seq. Internship placement is an integral part of the program providing practical experience and an opportunity for networking in the legal field.

For Admissions
Information, please contact:

Fresno City College
Admissions Office

(559) 442-4600

MCLE

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education credits are offered periodically through the Approved California State Bar General Provider: Fresno City College Student Paralegal Association.

To contribute an article,
email Editor at:
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ON POINT!

March 2010

NEW JUROR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMPUTER SAVVY

Excerpted from an Article Written by Paul Elias,
"Justice Not Blind to Juror Texts, Tweets," *The Fresno Bee*, March 7, 2010

Jurors across the country have caused mistrials, overturned convictions and caused chaotic delays in court proceedings. The courts across the nation are now saying enough with the tweets, the blogs, and the Internet searches.

In San Francisco, a Superior Court judge dismissed 600 potential jurors after several acknowledged going online to research the criminal case before them.

Mayor Sheila Dixon, Baltimore, challenged her misdemeanor embezzlement conviction after discovering five jurors "friended" one another on Facebook during her trial.

A federal judge in Florida declared a mistrial after eight jurors admitted Web surfing about a drug case.

Rules for jury service have not kept up with the times in both state and federal courts. New jury instructions are being adopted, and electronics are being banned from courtrooms. In January, the federal court's Judicial Conference of the United States issued so-called "Twitter instructions" to every federal judge, designed to be read to jurors at the beginning of a trial and before the jury deliberates.

The recommended jury instruction states, "You may not use any electronic device or media" in connection with the case. Visits to "any Internet chat room, blog, or Web site are also prohibited." Cell phones and the use of computers to research or communicate with others about the case they are hearing are also banned. "You may not do research about any issues involved in the case. You may not blog, Tweet, or use the Internet to obtain or share information."

Paul Elias, Fresno Bee author of "Justice Not Blind to Juror Texts, Tweets," states that issue first surfaced a few years ago, but only since there has been an increased number of high-profile and disruptive incidents have the courts begun to deal with the issue.

Greg Hurley voiced an observation that "Jurors face exposure if they go to the library or drive by a crime scene, but there's little risk in going online."

BUILDING WORK RELATIONSHIPS

No matter where you work, you will most likely find yourself in a position to want someone in the workplace that you can trust and that trusts you. How do you establish such a relationship? Here are some tips taken from “Why You Need Allies at Work” by Susan M. Heathfield.

1. When working on a group project, always do your best and be willing to be the one to give the extra effort.
2. Choose your battles wisely. Always getting your way or having your opinion “win” is not always to your benefit.
3. Keep your promises.
4. Resolve all conflicts as soon as possible. Do not let things fester.
5. Support your colleague’s project and help your colleague to succeed.
6. If there is a problem, talk to your colleague directly. Don’t back-stab or gossip about your colleague.
7. Treat your colleagues as equals. Do not be self-centered or act like you are a step above your colleagues.
8. Always act professionally.
9. Spend time with your colleagues. Ask them to lunch or to break so you can get to know each other as individuals.



PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR YOUR LEGAL WRITING NEEDS

The old adage, that the first impression may be the most important one, is also reflected through your legal writing. Whether it be a client letter, correspondence to another attorney office, e-mail, or the first pleading submitted to the court, how professional one’s writing appears helps others to size you up and to give them an impression of your legal competence. For that reason it is important to have your spelling, typing, grammar, organization, and legal citations correct. Even though your written drafts are to be supervised by your attorney boss, it is important for you to catch your errors first and to take on the responsibility to improve on the quality of the written product.

There are free internet websites which offer a volume of helpful information.

www.merriamwebster.com

This website gives you definitions, spellings, and synonyms for your use. If you don’t know how to spell the word and misspell the word, it offers you a list of options to select from in order to find the word you need.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/>

The above web address (URL) was established through Purdue University. Not only does it give you rules for proper grammar, but offers practice and visuals to help you understand the type of grammar information you requested.

Needing an online legal dictionary? Try:

<http://dictionary.law.com/>

This website offers three different types of lookups to find the word you need. You can either type in the exact word, click on a letter and then search through the list of words beginning with that letter, or enter the word and read through its definition along with other words and their definitions which are related to your search word.

What if your written communication contains citations to case law? Basically, the reason to have accurate citations is so that the recipient of your communication can find the same case law information. If part of the information is missing or the numbers are transposed, it reflects poorly on the integrity of your research. For California Superior Court cases rely on the *California Style Manual*. For other courts, you may want to rely on *The Bluebook* or the *ALWD Citation Manual*.

Always . . . always proofread your work. While you may have proofread your work from the computer screen, you may not catch errors until you have printed out the document, and then read it in hard copy form. If it is something that has a lot of numerals or citations, you may ask someone to proofread with you. If possible, finish your written project, take a break, and then come back to proofread. Oftentimes when you have worked on something and have read and re-read it while composing the product, your eyes will not catch errors as your brain fills in for what the eyes do not see. Keep your spell checker on, but since even typographical errors may create words, the spell checker may not catch all the errors that you think it should.

While you may not be able to catch 100 percent of your errors, 100 percent of the time, always put forth the effort to use available resources and to always proofread your work before sending it off.



HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

This is a quiz for people who know everything! These are not trick questions. They are straight questions with straight answers.

Quiz Questions:

1. Name the one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends.
2. What famous North American landmark is constantly moving backward?
3. Of all vegetables, only two can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year. What are the only two perennial vegetables?
4. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?
5. In many liquor stores, you can buy pear brandy, with a real pear inside the bottle. The pear is whole and ripe, and the bottle is genuine; it hasn't been cut in any way. How did the pear get inside the bottle?
6. Only three words in standard English begin with the letters "dw" and they are all common words. Name two of them.
7. There are 14 punctuation marks in English grammar. Can you name at least half of them?
8. Where are the lakes that are referred to in the Los Angeles Lakers?
9. Name the only vegetable or fruit that is never sold frozen, canned, processed, cooked, or in any other form except fresh

- Answers To Quiz -

1. *The one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends . . . boxing*

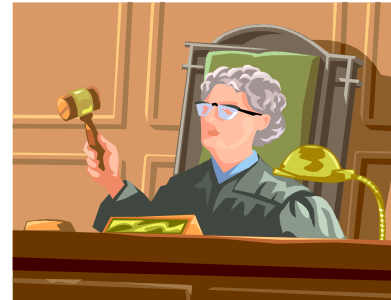
2. North American landmark constantly moving backward . . . Niagara Falls
(The rim is worn down about two and a half feet each year because of the millions of gallons of water that rush over it every minute.)
3. Only two vegetables that can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons asparagus and rhubarb.
4. The fruit with its seeds on the outside.
Strawberry.
5. How did the pear get inside the brandy bottle? It grew inside the bottle. (The bottles are placed over pear buds when they are small, and are wired in place on the tree. The bottle is left in place for the entire growing season. When the pears are ripe, they are snipped off at the stems.)
6. Three English words beginning with dw . . . dwarf, dwell and dwindle.
7. Fourteen punctuation marks in English grammar . . . period, comma, colon, semicolon, dash, hyphen, apostrophe, question mark, exclamation point, quotation marks, brackets, parenthesis, braces, and ellipses.
8. The original lakers referred to in Lakers in Minnesota. (The team was originally known as the Minneapolis Lakers, and kept the name when they moved west.)
9. The only vegetable or fruit never sold frozen, canned, processed, cooked, or in any other form but fresh...lettuce.

ETHICS TIPS

Paralegals need to honor the code that their attorney bosses must adhere to. The following are a couple of rules taken from the State Bar of California Litigation Section's Model Code of Civility and Professionalism:

A lawyer [paralegal] should conduct himself/herself with honesty, integrity, courtesy, and a commitment to justice.

A lawyer [paralegal] should honor all of his/her commitments, promises, and agreements, whether they are made orally or in writing.



AN ENGAGING LAWSUIT

Even though a woman called off the wedding, she successfully defended herself and won the lawsuit to keep the \$40,000 engagement ring. It seems that her fiancé was still legally married at the time he proposed to Ms. Parker with a 3.41-carat diamond engagement ring.

Ms. Parker called off the wedding after learning that her fiancé was still married, and that he spent time searching the Internet for other women. The prospective groom sued Parker to get the ring back.

It was a matter of contract. State Supreme Court Justice Rolando T. Acosta ruled that Parker could keep the engagement ring because the agreement to marry was void, and the fiancé's gift of a ring could not form a contract.

The two first "met" on an online dating service that listed the proposing man as "divorced."

TUTORING SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR FCC STUDENTS

Tutoring is available to FCC students. If you find that you need help in completing your assignments in a quality manner, consider contacting the Tutorial Center. Here is some helpful information for you to know in making your decision.

WHAT THE TUTOR CAN DO

- The tutor can identify your writing weaknesses: sentence errors, punctuation errors, usage errors, and spelling errors.
- The tutor can point out examples of your mistakes in your work, explain the rules, and correct one or two of your errors to you.
- The tutor can tell you when a paragraph or a part of a paper is weak or does not make sense and suggest improvements for clarity.
- The tutor can teach you how to use a style manual such as MLA.
- The tutor can help you generate ideas, develop a thesis, and organize a paper.

WHAT THE TUTOR CANNOT DO

- The tutor cannot proofread your paper.
- The tutor cannot make corrections beyond the first or second example of an error.
- The tutor cannot rewrite or rephrase any portion of your paper.

ONLINE

The FCC Tutorial Services offers online tutorial services Tuesday & Wednesday evenings from 7 - 10 p.m. in various subjects.

The Tutorial Center is located at the east end of the LRC, Room LI-134. The address is 1101 University Ave., Fresno, CA 93741. Its phone number is (559) 442-8209.

DO YOU STILL REMEMBER?

Do you remember when you first started the Paralegal Program, and you spent time laboring over your studies and your research? Remember how things were unfamiliar, and you needed to use all your concentration to accomplish your intended task?

Many students have passed through the doors of the law library, and have been grateful that the information was available in familiar surroundings.

However, how long has it been that you stopped to remember the rules of etiquette for being in a library? Let's review.

- The library is open for academic purposes. Socialization should be done other places than in the library.
- Students should be as quiet as possible in looking up the information they need.
- Students should put the books back on the book cart to be reshelved. Do not leave the books on the tops of bookcases nor on the tops of tables.
- Treat the books with respect—no defacing of public property. The books are to be used by a variety of individuals and no one should be making marks in the books, turning corners down or tearing pages from the books.
- Please NO CELL PHONES. No one wants to listen to your private conversations. It's terrifically distracting to try to study and yet be forced to listen to someone's personal conversation. Turn your cell phones off while in the library, or better yet, do not take the cell phones in the library at all.
- If you find that there are those in the law library that are disruptive, see if you can't politely ask them to tone it down. If that doesn't help, report them to the front desk.
- The librarians are there to help, but please first try to find the information on your own.
- Remember, the librarians and staff have to be out of the library in a timely fashion at its close. Please stop working when asked to do so.