

Best Practices: What First-Year Law Students Should Learn in a Legal Research Class

By Nancy P. Johnson. 28 Legal Reference Services Q. 77 (2009).

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Reviewer's Summary:

In this article, Johnson discusses her 25 years of personal experience in teaching first year legal research, and shares thoughts regarding which topics instructors (with typically limited course time) should cover. One of Johnson's more contentious assertions, particularly to readers in 2020, is that students utilize some print resources during their 1L course. Regarding topical coverage, Johnson feels that instructors must cover statutes, cases, and secondary sources, though in no particular order, and should cover administrative law research in some depth, acknowledging that many students will forget what they have learned, but should be familiar with the Code of Federal Regulations and the Federal Register. Johnson feels that students need not learn how to locate legislative history materials in their first year, and that this can be covered, instead, in an advanced legal research course. Within recommended topics, Johnson also offers more specific guidance on resources and skills to emphasize.

Summarized by: Meredith Capps, Vanderbilt University Law School, in 2020.