Top 20 Things Every Lawyer Should Know

Summary: This article lists common quotes, facts, ideas, and books that every lawyer should be familiar with.

1. U.S. Presidents Who Were Also Lawyers

- John Adams
- Thomas Jefferson
- James Madison
- James Monroe
- John Quincy Adams
- Andrew Jackson
- Martin Van Buren
- John Tyler
- James Polk
- Millard Fillmore
- Franklin Pierce
- James Buchanan
- Abraham Lincoln
- Rutherford B. Hayes
- Chester A. Arthur
- Grover Cleveland
- Benjamin Harrison
- William McKinley
- William Howard Taft
- Woodrow Wilson
- Calvin Coolidge
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- Richard Nixon
- Gerald Ford
- William Jefferson Clinton
Barack Obama

2. Oldest Continuing Law Practice in the United States
Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, New York City (1792)

3. How to Use Silence in an Opening Argument
- Use silence for emphasis and build-up.
- Silence works well with an attentive crowd, but it can be even more effective when employed to rein in a restless audience. “How come he stopped talking?”
- Maintain eye contact during pauses. Don’t look down.
- Don’t try using silence when you’re the last speaker before lunch—between ravenous hunger and scripted suspense, ravenous hunger wins every time.

4. How to Spot a Liar
- Looks away after finishing a sentence
- Body temperature suddenly rises, making him appear overheated
- Looks at your nose, cheek, or over your head
- Scratches chin, ear, or the side of his jaw
- Slight elevation in vocal pitch
- Closed fist and/or crossed arms
- Contracted pupils
- Shifts weight from foot to foot

5. How to Score Last-Minute Tickets
In Los Angeles, the place to call is Barry’s Ticket Service (818-990-8499). In New York City, several firms recommend Prestige Entertainment, which covers events nationwide (800-243-8849, prestigeentertainment.com).

6. The Twenty-seventh Amendment to the Constitution
No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of Representatives shall have intervened.

7. Five Rules of Vacation Days
- First-years often start in October. Don’t even think about vacation days until January.
- Most firms offer three weeks off. They expect you to take all three weeks, but for staffing and scheduling reasons, they prefer that you take it in one-to two-week blocks.
- Don’t be surprised if you’re working on December 24 or 26—Christmas is a time of goodwill, but not necessarily toward associates. Same with Thanksgiving.
- Submit your vacation request as early as possible. That puts you up front on the calendar, and it’s less likely that the partners will have a scheduled reason to say no.
- Likelihood of a deal blowing up during your vacation: high.

8. Five Quotations to Keep Handy
- “Whatever side I take, I know well that I will be blamed.” —Louis XIV
- “A lawyer with his briefcase can steal more than a hundred men with guns.” —Mario Puzo
- “Lucky are those who can act in such a way that they will not afterwards despise themselves, and who can live satisfied to receive admiration for virtues they do not possess. These are the only people who should go into business.” —Henri de Monfreid, French adventurer and smuggler (1879-1974)
- “Our whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thought of giving government the power to control men’s minds.” —Thurgood Marshall
- “You don’t pay taxes. They take taxes.” —Chris Rock

9. How to Get on the Green in Regulation
- “Don’t take a lesson just before you go out—you’ll be thinking about everything except hitting the ball.”
- “Don’t go to the range the day before and beat balls until your hands bleed. It just wears you out.”
- “Stay calm. Take all of your mishaps and shanked irons in good humor.”
• “Practice your short game—chipping and putting—because to be honest, you probably won’t hit too many greens in regulation.”

10. Address superiors as “Mr.” or “Ms.” until asked to do otherwise.

11. How to Pack a Bag That Fits in the Overhead

• Find out your airline’s criteria for carry-on luggage (they vary). Airline links can be found at onebag.com/industry
• Pack shoes tightly together, soles out, heels at opposite ends. If necessary, use the insides of your shoes as packing space.
• Go with a shoulder strap (try The Claw, made by Red Oxx, redoxx.com) instead of a wheeled bag, which is heavier and less roomy.

12. Four Books You Should Have Read

• The Brethren, by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong
• Gideon’s Trumpet, by Anthony Lewis
• Anatomy of a Merger, by James C. Freund
• Corporate Finance and the Securities Laws, by Charles J. Johnson and Joseph McLaughlin

13. How to Write Better

• If you’re marking something up, thoroughly read it [in its entirety] before you begin. Every document has its own style, and you need to understand that style so your revisions are seamless. Keep sentences as short as possible. If a thought that needs to be in one sentence would create too long a sentence, break the sentence into indented, numbered clauses. Nothing is more unfriendly than a sentence that runs on for the better part of a page without some indentation or other spacing to break it up.

14. How to Give a Compliment

• Make it sincere.
• Make it as specific as possible: “The work you did on that contract saved me from a lot of extra effort,” is much better than “Good work, Jane.”
• Don’t hand out compliments too frequently. They’ll lose their effect.

15. How to Receive a Compliment

• Say thank you—this sounds obvious, but some people grow so flustered in the face of praise they forget.
• Don’t feel obliged to return a compliment for a compliment—it sounds forced. If you really want the person to know how much you appreciate their kind words, follow up your “Thank you” with “That means a lot.”

16. How to Craft the Perfect Sound Bite

• Be who you are. Remember you’re not Walter Cronkite or Oprah.
• Don’t bury your lead—distill what’s most important and say it at the top.
• Be direct, but remember that an interview is not a conversation.
• Don’t use the words that got you your 760 verbal SAT score.
• When in doubt, repeat yourself.

17. All New Lawyers Spend Too Much Time Typing.

• Trying to draft a document on the computer is usually a bad idea, and trying to mark up a document on the computer is always a bad idea. Enlist the help of your secretary for typing; your time is far better spent proofreading what has been typed by someone else, which is something new hires spend way too little time doing.

18. Dos and Don’ts for Your First Conversation with the Managing Partner

Do:

• Offer a firm, but not bone-crushing, handshake.
• Make good eye contact.
• Clearly state name, office, and section, then close your mouth and open your ears.
End the conversation with a handshake before the managing partner has to.

Don’t:

- Try to impress with your legal skills/talent/knowledge. Compared to her, you don’t have any—you know it, the partner knows it.
- Monopolize the conversation.
- Talk smack about other attorneys and staff at the firm, attorneys at other firms, or other firms in general.
- Mention your LSAT score, or the huge number of hours you billed last month.
- Make a comment about a firm social function that includes the phrase “free drinks.”

19. Etiquette for Golfing With The Boss

- “Don’t take things too seriously, because you want the partner to win anyway.”
- “Check behind you before you take your practice swing.”
- “Don’t tee the ball in front of the markers.”
- “Offer to buy if you get snacks at the turn. Be ready to pay for drinks at the 19th hole.”
- “Don’t ever embarrass the boss. It’s okay to win, but if it’s match play, don’t win eight in seven, or it’ll be a long, silent ride back to the clubhouse.”

20. How to Make a Martini

- Fill a chilled glass with chilled vodka—Ciroc, the grape-based vodka, is the current favorite. Garnish with olives. “The trend now is to avoid vermouth, which wasn’t actually introduced to America until after the martini’s invention.” If you must: Add a quarter ounce, swirl around, pour out, and then add the vodka.
- The classic: Fill glass with gin; add two splashes of bitters, a splash of triple sec, and a half-teaspoon of sugar. Garnish with a lemon twist. Stir. Serve.