

FIRAC: A Practical Guide for Law Students

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What Is FIRAC?

FIRAC is a structured method of legal analysis used in case briefing and exam writing. It stands for:

- **F** – Facts
- **I** – Issue
- **R** – Rule
- **A** – Application (or Analysis)
- **C** – Conclusion

FIRAC helps organize legal reasoning in a clear, logical, and persuasive format. It is widely used in law school because it mirrors how courts analyze cases.

1. FACTS

Purpose

The Facts section provides a concise, legally relevant summary of what happened.

What to Include

- The parties (who is suing whom)
- The relationship between the parties
- Key events in chronological order
- Procedural posture (what happened in lower courts)
- The remedy sought

What to Avoid

- Irrelevant background details
- Emotional commentary
- Legal conclusions

Key Question

“Who is suing whom, for what, and why?”

2. ISSUE

Purpose

The Issue frames the precise legal question the court must answer.

How to Write It

- Phrase it as a question.
- Include legally significant facts.
- Connect facts to the legal rule.

Strong Example Format:

“Whether [specific facts] constitute [legal standard].”

Common Mistake

Writing the issue too broadly or too vaguely.

3. RULE

Purpose

The Rule states the governing legal principle.

What to Include

- The rule applied by the court
- Definitions of key legal terms
- Any relevant exceptions
- The policy or reasoning behind the rule (if helpful)

Important Distinction

The rule is not the holding. The rule is the general legal principle. The holding is how that rule applies to these specific facts.

4. APPLICATION (ANALYSIS)

Purpose

This is the heart of FIRAC. It explains how the rule applies to the facts.

What to Do

- Apply each element of the rule to specific facts.
- Address arguments from both sides.
- Explain why one side's reasoning is stronger.
- Avoid conclusory statements.

Strong Analytical Structure

- State element of rule
- Identify relevant fact
- Explain connection
- Address counterargument if relevant

Common Weakness

Repeating the facts without explaining how they satisfy the rule.

5. CONCLUSION

Purpose

State the court's holding clearly and directly.

What to Include

- The final answer to the issue
- Who wins
- The legal effect of the ruling

Keep it concise and decisive.

FIRAC vs. IRAC

IRAC includes Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion. FIRAC adds Facts at the beginning.

In law school exams, you may omit a formal Facts section and move directly into Issue.

Why FIRAC Matters

FIRAC: - Promotes logical reasoning - Prevents missing elements of a rule - Clarifies thinking - Mirrors judicial analysis - Improves exam performance

Advanced Tips for Law Students

1. The Rule Must Be Precise

Avoid vague statements like “A contract requires consideration.” Instead, define consideration.

2. The Application Section Should Be Longest

Most exam points come from analysis, not rule recitation.

3. Always Argue Both Sides (When Appropriate)

Especially on exams, show why each party might prevail.

4. Be Structured

Use headings or paragraph breaks for clarity.

Sample Mini-FIRAC Template

Facts: [Brief summary]

Issue: Whether...

Rule: Under common law...

Application: Here...

Conclusion: Therefore...

Final Thought

FIRAC is a disciplined way of thinking like a lawyer. The goal is not merely to reach an answer, but to demonstrate careful reasoning from rule to result.