



ARTICLE

Bluebook Bites: Practicing Citation One Day at a Time

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Introduction

Seeking student feedback in a tangible manner during the semester has inherent value.¹ Ongoing student feedback can help a professor gauge what

¹ The value of student feedback during the semester is well-supported but the method, timing, and nature of the feedback sought varies. See Eric Swank, *So When is the Other Shoe Going to Drop? Using Five-Minute Feedback Forms in First-Year Legal Writing Courses*, 38 SECOND DRAFT, no. 1, 2005, at 1.

is (and what is not) working in the classroom.² The professor can take the temperature of the class and get a decent read on how things are going.³

This article discusses how student feedback in my Fall 2024 class birthed a practice of delivering a daily question (sometimes with subparts) to students about creating or editing Bluebook citations. I call it “Bluebook Bites.” In Part I of this article, I explain how I gather student feedback and how it often leads to “one thing” that I change in the semester. In Part II, I describe the daily Bluebook Bite exercise. And in Part III, I describe how the exercise has evolved over time and lessons learned.

1. Seeking student feedback

My chosen way to seek student feedback during the semester is with a blank piece of paper and two prompts.⁴ On one side of the paper, the student is asked to write “one thing you like about class.” This is preceded by a prompt as to what that means. For example, it can be that you like group work, feedback on papers, PowerPoints, the teaching assistants, the pace of class, anything. On the other side of the paper the student is asked to write “one thing you would change.” I tell students this is not the time to ask me to change the textbook, my voice, or the writing problems we are using. It is more about something they think could be improved or help them *now*. Generally, I get great feedback with these simple prompts. It helps that I ask them how I can improve their current classroom experience.⁵ But it also requires a firm commitment from me to acknowledge the feedback and then address what can be fixed, adjusted, or improved in the moment.

² No one method is best, but they all have some unifying characteristics. Regardless of the medium, whether it is Survey Monkey, an online form, a QR code, or anything in between, the more effective inquiries for broader feedback (not just checking for student understanding) generally involve employing open-ended questions and seeking anonymous written feedback in some form. Swank uses an anonymous set of open-ended questions such as “What is still confusing to you about the class?” Swank *supra* note 1.

³ See Allison Pingree, *The Importance of Gathering & Incorporating Student Feedback*, INTO PRAC., <https://www.vpal.harvard.edu/importance-gathering-and-incorporating-mid-semester-student-feedback> (last visited May 26, 2026).

⁴ As with many great ideas, this one was borrowed from my colleague Professor Susan Carle who uses this technique and shared it with me.

⁵ Swank notes this also models professional behavior lawyers engage in when seeking feedback in practice. Swank, *supra* note 1.

This kind of feedback also allows a dialogue to develop with students about how class instruction is going in real time.⁶ I may think my Ted Lasso “key language as total football” lecture is brilliant but if enough students say they did not get it, or that they still do not understand the concept of key language, then I may need to rethink my approach.⁷

When my students provide mid-semester feedback some comments are evergreen: too many in-class exercises, too few in-class exercises, students like group work, students do not like group work, and they always want more examples. While there is no pleasing everyone, there is usually room to address and adjust on the margins. However, what I have noticed is that there is often “one thing” that stands alone. One thing that more than one student comments on that is a good idea, or a good critique, that I can address to make class better.⁸ When the issue is functional, or a simple thing like adjusting my office hours schedule, the resolution can be easy. But sometimes the “one thing” requires an adjustment in teaching or materials. The inclination can be to punt and wait until the next semester but there is joy to be had in adapting in the moment and taking your students along for the ride.

In the fall of 2024, the “one thing” fell into this second category. In some ways, it was an unusual semester. Classes at the University of Florida were disrupted because of back-to-back hurricanes. I got to the mid-semester check-in later in the semester than usual and the one thing was a request for more Bluebook practice. I knew students’ engagement with *The Bluebook* had suffered more than other components of the class even though they were already using Lexis’s Interactive Citation Workstation (“ICW”), I was lecturing on *The Bluebook* in class, and they had done in-class exercises. But the added disruptions caused some of the learning to

⁶ Swank, *supra* note 1.

⁷ For the record, the reviews have been mixed but I refuse to let go of the concept entirely.

⁸ For example, the first time I did this at the University of Florida, the “one thing” was my Canvas page. My students had very strong opinions about how I organized my Canvas page but none of them had said anything to me. Once I read the feedback, I thanked them and asked some follow up questions to understand their main concerns. And then I fixed it. Not all at once, but I figured out how to address the biggest issues they were having. How do I know it helped? They commented in their end of the semester evaluations on the fact that I had made changes based on their feedback and they appreciated my responsiveness.

be disjointed. With class time in short supply, I was at a loss for how to add “more.” I was hesitant to give them more work outside of class because they already felt stretched thin. I decided that finding something small that felt doable, bite-size even, but still useful, made the most sense. That’s how Bluebook Bites was born.

Bluebook Bites began as a single daily question (sometimes with subparts) about creating Bluebook citations that I posted on Canvas. It does not require the time commitment necessary to complete a whole ICW exercise or Bluebook practice set each day. Instead, it is designed to be like the New York Times’ Wordle or Spelling Bee. But, unlike Wordle, the correct answer is provided the next day with a new Bite.⁹ The answer also includes a reference to the correct rules within *The Bluebook*.

2. Bluebook Bites—Harnessing the power of daily practice

Daily practice to build a new skill is not a groundbreaking concept. Most of us have been introduced to the importance of daily practice if we have learned a new language, a musical instrument, or math.¹⁰ Proper citation formatting is a good candidate for daily practice because every interaction with *The Bluebook* reinforces the most fundamental skill required for good Bluebook citations – becoming familiar with *The Bluebook* itself.¹¹

⁹ While my preference would be to have the answer revealed after the student completes their Bluebook Bite, I lacked the technical skills to make that happen. I also liked that they would have to come back each day to see the answer to the previous day’s Bite. And since they were linked together to some extent with a weekly theme, the answer often helped with that day’s current Bluebook Bite.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Marie Kendall-Waters, *Achieving Mastery: How Important is Practice in Learning?*, TEL TALES: ADVENTURES IN TECH. ENHANCED LEARNING AT U OF P (Aug. 19, 2019), <https://teltales.port.ac.uk/2019/08/19/achieving-mastery-how-important-is-practice-in-learning/>; Adrian M. Haith & John W. Krakauer, *The Multiple Effects of Practice: Skill, Habit, and Reduced Cognitive Load*, 20 CURRENT OP. IN BEHAV. SCIENCES 196 (Apr. 2018) (“In summary, practice leads to three distinct changes in behavior: First, it improves skill level, including the ability to select actions more rapidly. Second, it permits appropriate actions to be selected with less cognitive effort than before. Third, it leads action selection to become habitual.”)

¹¹ But it is an important foundational tool that can get overlooked when thinking about *The Bluebook* where there are varying skills to learn with respect to citation. See Alexa Z. Chew, *Citation Literacy*, 70 ARK. L. REV. 869 (2018) (discussing the importance of students learning how to read citations not just perfecting the formatting required for them). Outsourcing

Instructional value is added by connecting the Bites to something students are currently working on for class. Bluebook Bites for a given week can provide practice for the most common mistakes on the previous writing assignment or provide practice for the current writing assignment. As the year goes on, the exercises can become even more nuanced. For example, in Spring 2025, I offered a white pages week to introduce students to more niche formatting they were not getting in their writing assignments like small caps font.¹² In Fall 2025, I added an editing component so that students were not just creating Bluebook citations, but correcting them as well. It allowed them to work on close reading and editing skills in conjunction with Bluebook practice.

A. Making daily practice accessible

While I liked the idea of daily practice and I was not as worried about creating the content itself, I needed to work on the logistics. I decided to stick with Canvas and put the daily Bluebook Bites in the Announcements page on Canvas each day during the week, Monday through Friday. I could schedule all the posts on Sundays which gave me time to put together a relevant theme or focus.

When I started to create the questions, I went back through my old Bluebook quizzes¹³ and reviewed common student mistakes on earlier writing assignments to find good material. I would also include current cases from a memo problem so that if a student did the Bluebook Bites they would have correct citations for their upcoming memo. If I was introducing a new concept or skill in a particular Bluebook Bite, then I would often include a hint with a reference to the correct part of *The Bluebook*. Participation was optional but I emphasized that the Bluebook Bites would help students with their ongoing graded assignments. Ultimately, I posted about four weeks' worth of citations practice based on past and upcoming

this practice also leaves more time to address other components of citation literacy in class. See generally *id.*

¹² For the Google Docs generation, exercises like these came in very handy as I tried to expose them to the functionality (and the need to use) Microsoft Word.

¹³ While I do not give Bluebook exams at UF Law, Bluebook exams were part of the legal writing programs at other schools where I have taught.

writing assignments in the fall of 2024.¹⁴ The whole thing went over well enough that I decided to expand it to the entire spring semester.

In spring, however, I encountered a new challenge. While students liked the concept, they were not fans of the Bluebook Bites appearing in the Canvas announcements page. Locating the Bluebook Bites in daily announcements worked well when we only had four weeks of class left in fall. But in spring it amassed far too many entries on the announcements page and some students complained that other announcements that appeared on the page got lost.¹⁵

I asked my students for suggestions to resolve the issue. That led to the creation of a Bluebook Bites sub-group on Canvas that had its own daily announcements section. I did not like adding one more navigation step because I was trying to create less friction for the students, but it served as the best option moving forward and resolved a recurring complaint in that semester's check-in. I left the new group as an opt-in invitation that students could accept. Also, once I created the group, I took some time to build it out and include other Bluebook resource materials as well.

¹⁴ Here is a typical citation building Bluebook Bite based on common mistakes I saw in a recent trial brief this semester:

Bluebook Bite for Wednesday March 25 - Creating a Full Cite in a Textual Sentence Today's Bite:

You want to cite to Allstate Insurance Company v. The Book Shop Stop Incorporated, located at volume 36 Federal Reporter Fourth Series, starting at page 21 for information on page 25 decided by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2026 for the first time in a textual sentence.

Answer to Yesterday's Bite:

United States v. Jones, 312 F. Supp. 3d 123, 127–28 (N.D. Cal. 2025).

Notes:

Spacing for reporter and court. Review Rule 6.1(a) and B6.

See B10(v) – never abbreviate United States when it is a named party; *see also* Rule 6.1(b) (United States may be abbreviated to U.S. only when used as an adjective).

For pincite pages, use of an en dash or hyphen is appropriate. Where the page numbers consist of three or more digits drop any repetitious digits other than the final two digits. See B10.1.2.

¹⁵ While I had purposefully avoided including announcements on Canvas, other administrative announcements were occasionally posted there.

Fast forward to the end of the spring semester. After the new group was set up, I drew on it for a secondary need. My students from the fall semester, as well as my students from the spring semester,¹⁶ asked if I could pull the Bluebook Bites together in one big review document for the law review write-on competition. As a result, I distributed 40 Bluebook Bites review questions to my students.¹⁷ Not exactly daily practice, but practice nonetheless.

B. Continuing adjustments

In Fall 2025, I placed all my Legal Writing I students into the Bluebook group at the beginning of the fall semester. I still waited to introduce Bluebook Bites for the last month of the semester because it felt too early to do it before the students had time to adjust to reading citations and basic citation creation. The Bluebook Bites were still not required but I tried to stress the value of daily practice. My favorite thing was once again creating a review/practice handout from the semester's Bluebook Bites to have students practice ahead of their closed book final exam.

This spring, I chose to start the semester with more intensive in-class and out-of-class exercises to get everyone back on track and reengaged with *The Bluebook*.¹⁸ Then I experimented with moving Bluebook Bites out of Canvas entirely and sending the daily Bluebook Bites to students in an email thread addressed to each section. So far this has been my favorite way to deliver Bluebook Bites and it is not too much of a burden on me.¹⁹

Takeaways

¹⁶ The students in our program change professors from Fall to Spring so I had requests from former students as well as current students.

¹⁷ Because I taught approximately half the first-year class (four sections over the course of the academic year), I decided to share the review with my department as well so that they could share it with their own students.

¹⁸ This also helped me gauge where my new students were with respect to reading and creating citations when classes began the spring.

¹⁹ This solved my other ongoing problem with Canvas which was my inability to create appropriate white pages citations, like small caps, without attaching a document to do so.

More than one student has thanked me for including a simple daily practice that is not time consuming and is something they can come back to when working on new drafts or when they have time. Students also appreciate the review at the end of the semester for our final in the fall and law review write-on in the spring. Similarly, I appreciate having another resource when a student comes to me and asks for more help with citations.

But there was another takeaway that I did not expect. Developing a new teaching tool during the semester, creating questions for each day, and thinking critically about what I was trying to accomplish in any given week was fun and fulfilling for me as well. Not only did it feel like I was problem-solving as the semester progressed and addressing student needs in real time, but I got better at *The Bluebook* too.²⁰ Thus, the exercise not only benefited the students, but the exercise also benefited me and helped me grow as an instructor.

²⁰ This became even more important to me after the release of the Twenty-Second edition of *The Bluebook* this year.