

CASE PREPARATION GUIDELINES

General Approach:

Learning means creating your own ideas, not just accepting new information. To prepare a case effectively, you need to take an active approach, and aim for some goal beyond just knowing the case. Study it as if you needed to understand it in order to solve some problem or accomplish some objective. Ask yourself such questions as: What experience can this case help me understand? What present or future problem can it help me solve? Use the study questions to help you use the information in the case actively. Don't just read the case. Put it to work!!

Specific Steps:

1. Get a sense of the whole case

Look at the case before you read it. What do the title and the heading tell you? What information do the tables, graphs and appendices present? Who are the central characters? What is the story about?

Look at the study questions. What do you want to know?

Read the case quickly, looking for the broad outlines. Identify and locate the information it presents.

2. State the issues

Ask yourself what the case is really about. What problems are the people in it dealing with? Where do you see conflict between ideas, goals, perspectives and values?

3. Organize the details

Read the case more carefully. Ask yourself which details will help you answer the study questions and your own questions.

Mark the case so you can find details later. Take notes to help you see relationships.

Ask yourself what additional information you need to complete the analysis. While it is not necessary to go find this information, awareness of what is missing can be quite useful.

4. Look for analysis to do

Return to the study questions: What do they ask you to figure out?

Identify the analytic steps suggested by the tables, graphs and appendices.

Find an approach to take to get more meaning out of this information.

5. Do the analysis you think is worthwhile

Prepare to present, explain and justify your analysis.

6. Make something of your work

Ask yourself what you have learned from the case. Articulate answers to the questions you began with. Prepare to present and defend your conclusions.

Some questions to ask in preparing a case

What is the situation? What problem(s) need to be solved?

What else do you need to know in order to:
 identify your options?
 select an option?
 implement a particular option?

What are all the possible options? (Think creatively)

What are the costs/benefits and pros/cons of each option? (Think critically)

Who (individuals and groups) will benefit or lose from each option?

What kinds of qualitative or quantitative analysis can you apply to the situation?

What would you do? Which option would you choose?

How adequate/appropriate is your chosen option?

What criteria do you use in making this assessment?

Do you see any difference between short- and long-term impacts of the option you have chosen?

What is the best outcome you can foresee from the option you propose?

What is the worst? Is there any possibility that the option you propose might make the problem worse?

What lessons can you learn from the outcomes presented in the case?

Why did the teacher assign the case? What are we supposed to learn or notice?