

University of Cincinnati School of Law  
Accounting for Lawyers

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“To be effective, business lawyers need to be conversant in the language of business—Finance and Accounting.”—E. Norman Veasey (former Chief Justice of Delaware Supreme Court and currently a Senior Partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges, LLP)

Those of us who teach the business related courses are eager for you to have a knowledge of accounting. The course, therefore, will be made as user friendly as possible.

Why you might ask, are we so eager that you study accounting? A partial answer is that you can practice in a number of areas without a prior law course—the materials are accessible—but that simply will not work here. The foundations of accounting have to be learned in some systematic way; otherwise, the numbers are likely to be unintelligible or worse yet, misleading.

This course will begin with a summary of the basic financial statements plus an overview of financial accounting—why it is so useful on the one hand, and its limitations on the other. In subsequent assignments I will introduce the structure of accounting, which is quite ingenious, based as it is on the simple balance sheet equation.

Numbers, I know, intimidate you. The course materials have been selected with an eye to keeping it simple, but as Einstein said, not too much so. Still, accounting has a methodology and jargon of its own, making it a poor course in which to play catch-up ball. I will use a few quizzes to inject some discipline in the process.

Unlike at the B-School, my purpose is not to make accountants of you. It is the uses and interpretation of financial statements that interest lawyers and bankers. The only way to do that, however, is to assign problems, so that you get a hands-on feel for at least the rudiments of the process.

My classroom style is a mixture of lecture and dialogue. Still, for a course that deals with materials that are from an unfamiliar discipline, the almost necessary assumption is that students will have read the assigned text material at least once before the corresponding lecture.

*Note: Students with substantial prior exposure to accounting (such as students with an MBA, joint MBA/JD, and undergraduate finance or accounting majors) are ineligible for this course.*