

ASPEN COLLEGE SERIES

■ Stephen P. Parsons

# INTERVIEWING AND INVESTIGATING

Essential Skills for the Legal Professional

SIXTH EDITION



Wolters Kluwer

# **INTERVIEWING AND INVESTIGATING**

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# List of Illustrations

<b>Illustration 3-1</b>	The United States Court System	52
<b>Illustration 3-2</b>	A Typical State Court System	53
<b>Illustration 3-3</b>	Stages of a Civil Lawsuit	54
<b>Illustration 3-4</b>	Stages of a Criminal Prosecution	56
<b>Illustration 3-5</b>	Procedural Steps in an Administrative Adjudication	64
<b>Illustration 3-6</b>	Comparing Formal Discovery and Informal Investigation	69
<b>Illustration 3-7</b>	Typical State Long-Arm Statute	77
<b>Illustration 3-8</b>	Summons in a Civil Action Form (Federal)	84
<b>Illustration 3-9</b>	Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service of Summons (Federal)	86
<b>Illustration 3-10</b>	Waiver of Service of Summons (Federal)	87
<b>Illustration 3-11</b>	Responsibilities of an Assisting Legal Professional in Connection with Filing and Service of a Complaint	88
<b>Illustration 4-1</b>	Scheduling Order	97
<b>Illustration 4-2</b>	Letter to Opposing Counsel Confirming Deposition by Agreement	100
<b>Illustration 4-3</b>	Letter to Court Reporter Confirming Engagement	101
<b>Illustration 4-4</b>	Notice of Deposition	102
<b>Illustration 4-5</b>	Deposition Subpoena <i>Duces Tecum</i>	103
<b>Illustration 4-6</b>	Proof of Service of Subpoena	104
<b>Illustration 4-7</b>	AO Form 88A: Deposition Subpoena for Civil Cases Used in Federal Court	105
<b>Illustration 4-8</b>	Deposition Summaries	107
<b>Illustration 4-9</b>	Interrogatories Regarding Medical Condition and Treatment	109
<b>Illustration 4-10</b>	FRCP 26 Motion for Protective Order	113
<b>Illustration 4-11</b>	FRCP 37 Motion to Compel Discovery	114
<b>Illustration 4-12</b>	Request for Production of Documents	115
<b>Illustration 4-13</b>	Document Modified for Production and Inspection	118
<b>Illustration 4-14</b>	Request for Admissions	120
<b>Illustration 4-15</b>	Definitions in Interrogatories	123
<b>Illustration 4-16</b>	Sample Preservation Letter	131
<b>Illustration 4-17</b>	Popular E-Discovery Technology Vendors	132
<b>Illustration 4-18</b>	Seven-Factor <i>Zubulake</i> Test for Apportioning Costs in E-Discovery	134
<b>Illustration 4-19</b>	Often Referenced Local Court Rules, Guidelines, and Model Orders on E-Discovery	138

<b>Illustration 5-1</b>	Criminal Complaint Form Used in Federal Court	146
<b>Illustration 5-2</b>	Summons in a Criminal Case Form Used in Federal Court	148
<b>Illustration 5-3</b>	Criminal Complaint	150
<b>Illustration 5-4</b>	Federal Grand Jury Subpoena Form	153
<b>Illustration 5-5</b>	Waiver of Indictment Form Used in Federal Court	155
<b>Illustration 5-6</b>	Indictment	157
<b>Illustration 5-7</b>	Motion for Bill of Particulars	159
<b>Illustration 5-8</b>	Bill of Particulars	160
<b>Illustration 5-9</b>	Discovery Request	161
<b>Illustration 5-10</b>	Letter Communicating Discovery Request to the Court Clerk	165
<b>Illustration 5-11</b>	Letter Communicating Discovery Request to the Prosecution	165
<b>Illustration 6-1</b>	Motion for Summary Judgment	187
<b>Illustration 6-2</b>	Affidavit in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment	188
<b>Illustration 7-1</b>	The Hearsay Rule: Its Primary Exceptions and Exclusions under the FRE	215
<b>Illustration 8-1</b>	Photograph of President Johnson Speaking to Abe Fortas	244
<b>Illustration 8-2</b>	Types of Written (including Electronic) Communication That Legal Professionals Routinely Produce	249
<b>Illustration 8-3</b>	Commonly Used Phrases That Could Be Eliminated	250
<b>Illustration 8-4</b>	Envelope Containing Confidential or Privileged Material	252
<b>Illustration 8-5</b>	Disclaimer Language to Accompany E-Mail Messages	252
<b>Illustration 8-6</b>	Contexts in Which the Legal Professional's Communication Skills are Critical	253
<b>Illustration 9-1</b>	Traits of the Effective Investigator	265
<b>Illustration 9-2</b>	First Step in Formulating the Plan of Investigation: Summarize Information Already Known	272
<b>Illustration 9-3</b>	Second Step in Formulating the Plan of Investigation: Identify the Goals of the Investigation	274
<b>Illustration 9-4</b>	Third Step in Formulating the Plan of Investigation: Brainstorm for Specifics	276
<b>Illustration 9-5</b>	Plan of Investigation Using a To-Do List Format	278
<b>Illustration 9-6</b>	Plan of Investigation Using a Topical Format	279
<b>Illustration 9-7</b>	Plan of Investigation Using a Sources Format	280
<b>Illustration 9-8</b>	Plan of Investigation Using a Cause of Action Format	281



<b>Illustration 9-9</b>	Evidence Log	286
<b>Illustration 10-1</b>	Goals to Be Accomplished in the Initial Client Interview	294
<b>Illustration 10-2</b>	Memorandum Summarizing Client Contact	298
<b>Illustration 10-3</b>	Confirmation Letter to Client	299
<b>Illustration 10-4</b>	Medical Records Authorization	299
<b>Illustration 10-5</b>	Employment Records Authorization	300
<b>Illustration 10-6</b>	Educational Records Authorization	300
<b>Illustration 10-7</b>	Hourly Rate Legal Services Agreement	301
<b>Illustration 10-8</b>	Flat Fee Legal Services Agreement	302
<b>Illustration 10-9</b>	Contingency Fee Legal Services Agreement	303
<b>Illustration 10-10</b>	Page of Interviewer's Questions and Notes	313
<b>Illustration 10-11</b>	Checklist for Personal Injury Case	316
<b>Illustration 10-12</b>	Seating Arrangements in an Office	319
<b>Illustration 10-13</b>	Seating Arrangements at a Rectangular Conference Table	320
<b>Illustration 10-14</b>	Seating Arrangements at a Rounded Conference Table	322
<b>Illustration 10-15</b>	Doors and Windows in Seating Arrangements	323
<b>Illustration 11-1</b>	Diagram or Sketch Drawn in Interview	340
<b>Illustration 11-2</b>	Time Line Drawn by Client	341
<b>Illustration 11-3</b>	Memorandum Summarizing Initial Client Conference	350
<b>Illustration 11-4</b>	Follow-up Letter to Client	353
<b>Illustration 12-1</b>	Goals to Be Achieved in a Fact Witness Interview	358
<b>Illustration 13-1</b>	Memorandum Summarizing Witness Interview	388
<b>Illustration 13-2</b>	Handwritten Witness Statement	398
<b>Illustration 13-3</b>	Typed Witness Statement	399
<b>Illustration 14-1</b>	Newspaper Advertisement Seeking Witnesses	411
<b>Illustration 14-2</b>	Popular Online Social Networking Sites	414
<b>Illustration 15-1</b>	Expert's Resume	434
<b>Illustration 15-2</b>	Questions to Ask Attorney References Concerning an Expert Witness	437
<b>Illustration 15-3</b>	Typical Duties of the Assisting Legal Professional in Connection with Expert Witnesses	438
<b>Illustration 15-4</b>	Sample Expert Witness Interrogatory and Answer	440
<b>Illustration 15-5</b>	Information Typically Sought by Attorneys in Discovery Concerning the Opposing Party's Expert Witnesses	441
<b>Illustration 16-1</b>	Structure of the Federal Government	450
<b>Illustration 16-2</b>	Web Site Addresses for Frequently Contacted Federal Agencies	452
<b>Illustration 16-3</b>	FOIA Request Letter	461
<b>Illustration 16-4</b>	Privacy Act Request Letter	463

<b>Illustration 16-5</b>	Selected Federal Agencies and Their Records	463
<b>Illustration 16-6</b>	Request for Social Security Earnings Information	465
<b>Illustration 16-7</b>	Request for Copy or Transcript of Tax Form	469
<b>Illustration 17-1</b>	Typical Professions and Occupations Licensed by States	479
<b>Illustration 17-2</b>	Examples of Local Government Records	482
<b>Illustration 17-3</b>	Statement of Purpose from Public Records Act of the State of Washington	487
<b>Illustration 17-4</b>	Definition of "Public Records" from the Tennessee Public Records Act	487
<b>Illustration 17-5</b>	Typical Public Records Exempted from Disclosure under State PRAs	488
<b>Illustration 17-6</b>	Massachusetts PRA Records Request Letter	492
<b>Illustration 17-7</b>	Indiana Records Request Response Letter	493
<b>Illustration 17-8</b>	Georgia Records Request Response Letter Claiming Exemption	494
<b>Illustration 17-9</b>	Summary of State and Local Records Accessible Through Westlaw	495
<b>Illustration 17-10</b>	Summary of State and Local Records Accessible Through LexisNexis	496
<b>Illustration 18-1</b>	Medical Records Authorization (Hospital)	504
<b>Illustration 18-2</b>	Cover Letter to Doctor's Office	505
<b>Illustration 18-3</b>	Cover Letter to Hospital Records Custodian	506
<b>Illustration 18-4</b>	Agreed Order Allowing Inspection of Medical Records	507
<b>Illustration 18-5</b>	Deposition Subpoena <i>Duces Tecum</i> Seeking Production of Medical Records	508
<b>Illustration 18-6</b>	Examples of Business Directories	516
<b>Illustration 18-7</b>	Examples of General Business Information Available on Westlaw	517
<b>Illustration 18-8</b>	Examples of General Business Information Available on LexisNexis	517

# Preface

## Approach

One underlying premise to this text is that interviewing and investigating are *skills* to be mastered, rather than a unit of information to be memorized. A second is that interviewing and investigating are *essential* skills for both the lawyer and the paralegal assisting the lawyer, every bit as critical as legal research skills.

Consequently, the approach taken in the text is twofold. First, textual discussion of the subject matter is joined with hands-on learning activities in the Learn by Doing (LBD) exercises. Like any skill, interviewing and investigating can be learned effectively only by practice. Second, varied and realistic legal scenarios are provided in which the student applies the principles studied. With that in mind, the Illustrations, Examples, Hypotheticals, LBD, and Sleuth on the Loose exercises used throughout the book, as well as the Case Studies provided in Appendix A, present a variety of both civil and criminal and litigation and non-litigation scenarios.

A multi-layered approach is utilized in each chapter of this book. First, numerous brief Examples are sprinkled through the text along with frequent Illustrations. Then lengthier Hypotheticals, typically three to six, are positioned at key points throughout each chapter. The Hypotheticals present a specific factual and legal context, complete with characters, in which the student can see the application—or misapplication—of the concepts being studied. Discussion Questions accompany the Hypotheticals rather than being collected at the end of the chapter so the student, or the class as a whole, can engage in immediate analysis to reinforce the lessons taught by the Hypotheticals.

In most chapters, the Hypotheticals are serial in nature. They follow the exploits of a single new lawyer or paralegal working on a particular case. This allows the students to see how an investigation progresses over time in a real case. It also allows them to see the various types of responsibilities imposed on the lawyer or paralegal involved in investigation. And it allows them to see the consequences of decisions made and actions taken—for good or ill—as a legal matter moves along.

At the end of each chapter, numerous LBDs are presented, designed to be selectively assigned by the instructor. The LBDs require the student to close the book, go out, and engage in some hands-on learning activity related to the subject covered in the chapter. The LBD activities range from having the student determine a state's requirements for becoming a licensed private investigator (LBD 1-2); to interviewing an experienced trial attorney or litigation paralegal concerning the importance of using verbal and nonverbal communication skills to evaluate clients, witnesses, jurors, judges, and opposing counsel (LBD 8-4); locating and evaluating



actual experts in various disciplines who live in the student's area (LBD 15-2); touring the local or regional office of a federal or state agency to learn, among other things, how the agency collects and maintains records and how it handles requests for information (LBD 16-3 and 17-5); and performing a factual investigation of a large local business using the Internet and other resources (LBD 18-4). Although the LBDs are collected at the end of each chapter, references to them are made at relevant points throughout the text.

Additionally, the text provides four detailed Case Studies (Appendix A), complete with characters, designed to be assigned to the students individually or in small groups. The Case Studies present realistic scenarios (a murder case, a personal injury case, a domestic relations case, and a real estate development project) and provide a vehicle for the student to put into practice the skills being learned. As the student moves through the text with an assigned Case Study, the LBDs at the end of chapters are keyed to each of the Case Studies and require the student to identify and evaluate evidentiary questions based on the facts in the case (Chapter 7); prepare a complete investigation plan for the case (Chapter 9); schedule, prepare for, and conduct the interview of a person role-playing as the client in the Case Study (Chapters 10 and 11); schedule, prepare for, and conduct the interview of a person role-playing as a witness in the case (Chapters 12 and 13); prepare investigation reports, authorizations, witness statements, and correspondence related to the case (Chapters 10-13); identify potential witnesses and plan how to locate missing witnesses in the case (Chapter 14); locate and evaluate qualified experts who might be needed in the case (Chapter 15); and determine how they would go about seeking relevant factual information in the case from federal, state, and local government sources and private sources (Chapters 16-18). In short, to learn by doing.

Great emphasis is placed in this text on resources available to the investigator, particularly Internet resources. Appendix B, Resources for the Investigator, provides a rich, diverse source of investigative tools along with information on how to locate and access them. In Appendix B, the student will find online and other resources for locating experts; online resources and an extensive bibliography on alternative dispute resolution; extensive reading lists for developing good communication skills in verbal, nonverbal, and written communication; online sources for accessing information from state and local governments and all three branches of the federal government; written and online resources for utilizing the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts; citations to the open records acts of all fifty states; people-locating resources, from online people-search services to genealogical resources; extensive lists of records-search companies and online database vendors; and even a comprehensive section on resources for and about private investigators. References to Appendix B are made at relevant places throughout the text and a number of LBDs require the student to utilize the resources found there.

## Organization of the Book

The text is divided into two parts:

- **Part 1:** Foundations for Interviewing and Investigating (Chapters 1–8)
- **Part 2:** Formulating and Executing a Plan of Investigation (Chapters 9–18)

Part 1 introduces the student to the legal contexts in which interviewing and investigating skills are utilized by attorneys and paralegals assisting them. Based on 30 years of experience as a trial attorney, the author firmly believes that in order to be effective in any understand the type of contested matter both attorneys and paralegals must:

1. understand the critical connection between law and fact;
2. be able to engage in effective factual analysis;
3. have well-developed communication skills;
4. be knowledgeable and committed to the highest standards of legal ethics; and
5. be well grounded in the adversarial system, the formal discovery rules in civil and criminal cases, the distinctions between formal and informal investigation, and the basic rules of evidence.

Accordingly, those subjects are covered in Part 1 of the book. They are studied from the viewpoint of the investigating lawyer or paralegal, with emphasis on practical application in real-life scenarios reinforced by the LBD exercises.

Part 2 of the book walks the student step by step through an investigation. We begin with how to plan an investigation and how to properly handle documents and physical evidence uncovered in an investigation (Chapter 9). Then we consider how to schedule, prepare for, and conduct a client interview (Chapters 10 and 11), and a fact witness interview (Chapters 12 and 13). Next we learn how to identify potential witnesses and how to locate the missing witness (Chapter 14). Chapter 15 is devoted to the important topic of locating, evaluating, and working with expert witnesses. The text concludes with three chapters devoted to the myriad sources of information available to the investigator, including information available from the federal government (Chapter 16), information available from state and local governments (Chapter 17), and private sources of information (Chapter 18).

Because of its emphasis in Part 1 on the legal context in which the interviewing and investigating is done, including the emphasis on the adversarial system, civil and criminal procedure, formal discovery, and the supporting Case Studies, this work can be used as a text for a litigation course as well as an investigation course. The Instructor's Manual provides a sample syllabus and suggested chapter sequencing for teaching the course over one or two academic terms, and for using the text for either a comprehensive litigation course, or a more narrowly focused interviewing/investigation or clinical practice course.

## Key Features

Among the many learning tools which distinguish this book are those multi-layered features discussed above:

- Brief Examples
- Illustrations
- Hypotheticals
- Discussion Questions following the Hypotheticals
- Key Words and Phrases
- Learn by Doing exercises
- Sleuth on the Loose
- Case Studies
- Comprehensive glossary

In addition, the text contains occasional Ethical Notes and Career Tips for the student.

The text is designed for use by both law students and paralegal students. Thus the generic "legal professional" phrase is used throughout unless a particular Example or Hypothetical is role-specific.

The Instructor's Manual for the text contains detailed Character Descriptions for each of the clients and witnesses mentioned in the Case Studies, Instructions for persons role-playing as clients or witnesses, and an Evaluation Form for those persons to complete for each interviewer and return to the instructor. The Instructor's Manual also contains suggested procedures for videotaping and critiquing student interviews, model syllabi, comprehensive examination questions covering all of the chapters with answer keys, and a comprehensive section containing suggested approaches to teaching with the text, including testing and grading, how to use the LBDs in each chapter, how to use Appendix B effectively, and how best to utilize the Hypotheticals, Examples, and Illustrations in each chapter. The complete texts of the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act are also set out in the Instructor's Manual.

Finally, a word about the alliterative and other fictitious names used in the Hypotheticals. These names are not used simply to be clever. The author has developed these materials over fifteen years of teaching an interviewing and investigating course for paralegal students, as well as trial preparation courses for law students, and there are calculated pedagogical goals involved in the name selections. Some Hypotheticals use names keyed to the factual context. For example, in Chapter 6 we learn the importance of knowing the basic rules of evidence by following a dispute between professional golfer, Snap Hook, and his caddy, Teed Off, over an alleged promise to share the winnings in a major golf tournament. In Chapter 7, we review the specific rules of evidence by focusing on a fraud allegation made by Gulli Bull against Smooth Talker. In Chapter 9 we learn how to prepare a plan of investigation by working on an automobile accident case involving Speed Freak and Granny Puttalong. And in Chapter 14 we learn how to identify witnesses and locate missing witnesses when Turnme Loose dumps her boyfriend, Getta Life, and then turns up dead.

Other Hypotheticals use names keyed to the lesson to be learned. For example, in Chapter 2 paralegal Sally Oops teaches us the consequences of mishandling client funds, even inadvertently. The experiences of paralegal Ned Newatit demonstrate why new paralegals and the attorneys supervising them need to be familiar with the dangers of unauthorized practice of law (UPL), and why both need to be aware of the danger of disclosing client confidences. In Chapter 8, paralegal Dis Tracted illustrates the perils of not using good communication skills with co-workers. In Chapter 12, Dee Termined demonstrates how to handle the hostile witness and the skeptical witness. And in Chapters 10–13, Paul Perfect just does a, well, perfect job of preparing for and conducting client and witness interviews.

Thus, the names serve not only to catch and hold the *attention* of the student but also to constantly *remind* the student of what the Hypothetical is about and to *reinforce* the concept being taught. Of course, the names might also make the learning experience a little more enjoyable for the students and even for the instructor.

To keep the dates used in Illustrations, Examples, and Case Studies current, this sixth edition continues to use the flexible year notation system in which YR00 is always the present year. Previous years are designated as YR-1, YR-2, YR-3, etc. Future years are designated YR+1, YR+2, YR+3, etc. The instructor can choose to have students use this year designation system in documents they are assigned to prepare or have them convert the year designations in the materials to the actual year of use.

## New for the Sixth Edition

For this sixth edition, all Web sites have been updated and references to a number of new sites added. Summaries of newly decided cases involving topics such as waiver of attorney-client privilege by reason of using social media to communicate are included. The LBD and Sleuth on the Loose features have been updated and freshened throughout the text.

The references to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure in Chapters 3 and 4 have been revised to comply with the December 2015 amendments including changes to FRCP 26(c)(1)(B) authorizing the trial court to order cost shifting in connection with a motion for protective order during discovery, the new language of FRCP 37(e) adopting a national standard for imposition of sanctions for spoliation of ESI, and the revision of FRCP 16(b)(3) to provide the opportunity for greater judicial input on certain e-discovery issues at the outset of a case.

The Federal Rules of Evidence in Chapters 6 and 7 have also been updated to include the latest changes including those to FRE 801(d)(1)(B) and 803(6)(7)(8). A number of new Examples have been added to the evidence material in these chapters and a brand new section on the Confrontation Clause has been added to the hearsay discussion in Chapter 7 as well.

The sixth edition continues the emphasis on changes in communication technology that are revolutionizing the practice of law. Thus the topics of e-discovery in Chapter 4, identifying and locating witnesses in Chapter 14, and the identification of private, non-governmental sources

of information from individuals and entities in Chapter 18, all include discussions of the latest developments in online social networking and technology. And the case studies reflect the real world we live in with social media playing a significant role. Characters in those case studies Tweet and post Facebook messages just like the rest of us—and sometimes to their detriment. The material treating public records held by state and local governments in Chapter 17 and particularly the explanation of what state public records acts cover and how to access them continues to be expanded with new Illustrations and Examples.

## Textbook Resources

The companion Web site for Stephen P. Parsons's *Interviewing and Investigating: Essential Skills for the Legal Professional*, Sixth edition, at [http://aspenlawschool.com/books/Parsons\\_Interviewing6e/](http://aspenlawschool.com/books/Parsons_Interviewing6e/) includes additional resources for students and instructors, including:

- Study aids to help students master the key concepts for this course. Visit the site to access interactive StudyMate exercises such as flash cards, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and crosswords. These activities are also available for download to an iPod or other handheld device.
- Instructor resources to accompany the text.
- Links to helpful websites and updates.

Instructor resources to accompany this text include a comprehensive Instructor's Manual, Test Bank, and PowerPoint slides. All of these materials are available for download from our companion Web site.

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Stephen P. Parsons

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# Summary of Contents

<i>Contents</i>	xi
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xxxiii
<i>Preface</i>	xxxvii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xliii
<b>PART 1: Foundations for Interviewing and Investigating</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1:</b> Introduction to Interviewing and Investigating	3
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Ethical and Professional Responsibilities for Legal Professionals Engaged in Interviewing and Investigating	23
<b>Chapter 3:</b> The Adversarial System, ADR, and Pre-filing Investigation	51
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Formal Discovery in Civil Litigation	93
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Formal Discovery in Criminal Litigation	143
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Rules of Evidence for the Investigator—Part 1	177
<b>Chapter 7:</b> Rules of Evidence for the Investigator—Part 2	197
<b>Chapter 8:</b> Communication Skills for the Investigator	235
<b>PART 2: Formulating and Executing a Plan of Investigation</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Chapter 9:</b> Formulating a Plan of Investigation	263
<b>Chapter 10:</b> Preparing for a Client Interview	291
<b>Chapter 11:</b> Conducting a Client Interview	329
<b>Chapter 12:</b> Preparing for a Witness Interview	357
<b>Chapter 13:</b> Conducting a Witness Interview	375
<b>Chapter 14:</b> Identifying and Locating Fact Witnesses	405
<b>Chapter 15:</b> Working with Expert Witnesses	427
<b>Chapter 16:</b> Public Sources of Information—Federal	447
<b>Chapter 17:</b> Public Sources of Information—State and Local	475
<b>Chapter 18:</b> Private Sources of Information	501
<b>Appendix A:</b> Case Studies	527
<b>Appendix B:</b> Resources for the Investigator	539
<i>Glossary</i>	575
<i>Index</i>	593
<i>Table of Cases</i>	599

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xxxiii
<i>Preface</i>	xxxvii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xliii

<b>PART 1: Foundations for Interviewing and Investigating</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction to Interviewing and Investigating</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A. Why These Skills Are Important to the Lawyer</b>	<b>3</b>
1. The relationship between law and fact	5
2. Factual analysis	6
a. Comprehension	6
b. Evaluation	7
c. Application	9
3. The role of factual investigation in civil litigation	10
a. By the attorney for the plaintiff	10
b. By the attorney for the defendant	10
4. The role of factual investigation in criminal litigation	11
5. The role of factual investigation in other legal representation	12
<b>B. Other Skills and Areas of Knowledge Related to Interviewing and Investigating</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Substantive law	13
2. Legal research and writing	13
3. Rules of evidence	14
4. The adversarial system and rules of procedure	14
5. Ethics and professional responsibility	14
<b>C. The Lawyer's Use of Paralegals in Interviewing and Investigating</b>	<b>15</b>
1. Lawyers using paralegals	15
2. Definition of a paralegal	15
3. The paralegal as an agent of the attorney	16
a. The actions of the paralegal may be legally binding on the attorney and the client	16
b. The attorney may be liable for damages caused to another by the paralegal	16
c. The attorney may be sanctioned for actions of the paralegal	17
4. Paralegals as licensed private investigators	18
5. What attorneys expect from paralegals	18
a. The willingness to work under the supervision of the attorney	18
b. The initiative to clarify assignments	19
c. Good judgment	19
d. The discipline to keep the supervising attorney well advised	19

e.	The ability to work well under pressure	19
f.	Good communication and people skills	19
g.	Objectivity	19
h.	Thoroughness	20
i.	Creativity	20
j.	Sound interviewing and investigating skills	20
	Chapter Summary and Conclusion	21
	Review Questions	21
	<i>Key Words and Phrases to Remember</i>	21
	<i>Learn by Doing</i>	22
	<b>Chapter 2: Ethical and Professional Responsibilities for Legal Professionals Engaged in Interviewing and Investigating</b>	23
A.	Sources of Ethical and Professional Responsibility	24
1.	State statutes which prohibit the unauthorized practice of law (UPL)	24
2.	Mandatory ethical rules governing attorneys	24
3.	Ethical rules promulgated for the paralegal	25
4.	Guidelines for attorneys and paralegals working together in the law office	25
5.	Advisory ethical opinions	25
B.	Consequences of Unethical Conduct	26
1.	To the lawyer	26
a.	The lawyer may be fired by the client	26
b.	The lawyer may be sued by the client damaged by the unethical behavior	26
c.	The lawyer may be sanctioned	27
d.	The lawyer may face criminal prosecution	27
e.	The lawyer's reputation may be damaged	27
2.	To the paralegal	28
a.	The paralegal may lose his or her job	28
b.	The paralegal may lose his or her certification	28
c.	The paralegal may lose his or her right to appear before administrative agencies	28
d.	The paralegal may be sued by the client damaged by the unethical action	28
e.	The paralegal may be subject to criminal prosecution	28
f.	The paralegal's reputation may be tarnished	29
C.	Specific Ethical and Professional Concerns for Legal Professionals Engaged in Interviewing and Investigating	29
1.	The unauthorized practice of law	29
a.	Establishing an attorney-client relationship	30
b.	Setting legal fees	30
c.	Giving legal opinions or legal advice	30
d.	Representing a client before a court or tribunal	32
e.	Negotiating a legal matter on behalf of a client	32
f.	Delegable tasks and the attorney's responsibility to avoid an agent's UPL	33