



WHITE PAPER

The LAW Accelerator™

A Three-Dimensional Program for Self-Represented Civil Litigants

Sonja Ebron, PhD · Debra Slone, PhD
Co-Founders, Courtroom5 · March 2026

THE BRAND PROMISE

You will become capable. You will know exactly what to do. You will not be alone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Case for a Litigation Readiness Program

More than 75 percent of civil litigants in U.S. state courts have no legal representation. In eviction courts, that figure exceeds 90 percent. These are not simple disputes — they involve housing, wages, custody, debt, civil rights, and personal injury. The stakes are high. The procedural complexity is real. The consequences of getting it wrong are permanent.

The conventional response has been information: court websites, self-help centers, legal forms, plain-language explainers. None of it has moved outcomes. The fundamental problem is not a shortage of legal information. It is the absence of a structured program — one that transforms an overwhelmed litigant into a competent self-advocate through a repeatable method, AI-powered tools, and the accountability of community.

The LAW Accelerator™ is that program. Modeled on the structured-learning frameworks that transformed how startup founders, small business owners, and nonprofit leaders develop capability, the LAW Accelerator organizes civil litigation preparation around three simultaneous, interdependent dimensions:

| Build the Case | Orient Procedurally | Execute Deliberately |
|---|--|--|
| Continuously mapping facts and evidence to the legal elements that must be proven — producing a measurable, real-time picture of case strength. | Periodically reassessing where the case stands after each filing, understanding the next procedural decision, and preparing to act deliberately. | Preparing and filing each document with the same structured workflow attorneys use — researching rules, selecting facts, researching law, drafting, and practicing the argument. |

These dimensions are not sequential stages. They are ongoing, parallel workstreams that reinforce each other throughout a case that may last months or

years. This white paper explains the rationale for the program structure, describes the three dimensions in depth, and shows how every feature of the Courtroom5 platform — Proof, Strategy, Documents, Community, and Learning — is designed to realize that structure.

SECTION 1

The Access-to-Justice Crisis

The civil justice system in the United States operates on the assumption that parties will be represented by trained legal counsel. Rules of procedure, evidentiary standards, and motion practice are designed with that assumption built in. When one party has a lawyer and the other does not, the imbalance is not merely informational — it is structural.

The Scale of the Problem

Self-represented litigants are not the exception in U.S. civil courts. They are the majority. At least one party was self-represented in more than three-quarters of civil cases studied across ten urban counties — cases spanning debt collection, landlord-tenant disputes, torts, and small claims. In eviction proceedings, the proportion of unrepresented defendants frequently exceeds 90 percent, even as landlord plaintiffs are typically represented by counsel.

National Center for State Courts, Landscape of Civil Litigation in State Courts (2015), analyzing 925,344 civil cases disposed across 10 urban counties.

These cases are not trivial. Eviction proceedings determine where families live. Debt collection cases strip wages and bank accounts. Custody disputes reshape children's lives. Civil rights cases seek accountability for abuse of power. The litigants in these matters are not choosing self-representation out of preference — they are doing so because they cannot afford the alternative.

The civil justice gap is not a shortage of legal information. It is a shortage of structured preparation — the kind that turns a person who knows what happened into a litigant who can prove it.

Why Existing Responses Fall Short

Court self-help centers provide forms and procedural information, but their mandate and staffing prevent them from offering strategy, document preparation, or case-specific guidance. Legal aid organizations serve a small fraction of those who need help; in most jurisdictions, demand exceeds capacity by a factor of three or more. Online legal information is abundant and largely accurate, but information is not preparation.

The newest entrant — generic AI tools — has introduced a new category of harm. Large language models confidently generate legal-sounding text that misidentifies procedural requirements, cites non-existent cases, and applies the law of the wrong jurisdiction. Courts have sanctioned both attorneys and self-represented litigants for submitting AI-generated filings containing fabricated citations — a phenomenon documented in hundreds of cases since 2023 and still accelerating.

See Mata v. Avianca, Inc., 678 F. Supp. 3d 443 (S.D.N.Y. 2023); Damien Charlotin, AI Hallucination Cases Database, damiencharlotin.com/hallucinations (300+ documented cases through 2025, now tracking 2–3 new incidents per day).

The Real Gap: Method, Not Information

The self-represented litigants who succeed share a common characteristic. They approach their cases the way attorneys approach cases: systematically. They build their evidentiary record. They track the procedural posture of the case. They research the rules before drafting. They practice their arguments before hearings. They act deliberately rather than reactively.

| TYPICAL PRO SE LITIGANT | PREPARED PRO SE LITIGANT |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reacts to whatever just arrived Doesn't know what can be proven Misses deadlines; doesn't know the clock is running Argues from memory at hearings Feels isolated and overwhelmed Stops when it gets hard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts deliberately at every stage Knows the strength of their case in real time Tracks procedural posture and makes strategic choices Prepares and practices arguments before hearings Works within a community that understands the fight Finishes — because the method doesn't depend on courage alone |

This is not a matter of intelligence or education. It is a matter of having a method — and having the structure, tools, and support to execute that method under the pressure of real deadlines and high stakes. That is precisely what the self-represented litigant population lacks, and precisely what no existing response provides.

SECTION 2

Why Programs Work Where Tools Don't

The distinction between a tool and a program is not semantic. A hammer is a tool. An apprenticeship is a program. Both involve the hammer — but the apprenticeship is what produces a carpenter.

The legal technology industry has spent the last decade building hammers: document automation tools, legal information portals, AI assistants, court filing systems. These tools are useful. They do not, by themselves, produce competent litigants.

What Tools Provide — and What They Don't

Tools provide capability on demand. A document automation tool generates a motion when you ask it to. A legal research database returns cases when you search for them. These are genuine improvements over a blank page and a law library.

But a self-represented litigant under the pressure of a real case does not know what to ask for, when to ask for it, or how to evaluate what comes back. Tools do not teach the method. They do not tell you that you need to research the rules before drafting, or that you should map your facts to legal elements before deciding what to file or what to argue. Tools answer questions; they do not teach you which questions to ask.

The Accelerator Model

Accelerator programs — Techstars, Y Combinator, Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses — exist across many fields. Despite their differences, they share a

common logic: someone has potential but lacks the method, structure, connections, and confidence to realize it on their own. The accelerator compresses the learning curve by delivering a structured curriculum, expert access, peer community, and accountability — in a context where the stakes are real.

Accelerators do not simply provide resources. They impose structure on the use of those resources. A Y Combinator founder does not just receive office hours with advisors; they attend structured sessions, meet weekly milestones, and present to a cohort of peers who hold them accountable. The program produces founders who know how to build companies because it forces them to practice building companies, with support, in sequence.

THE ACCELERATOR PREMISE APPLIED TO LITIGATION

A self-represented litigant does not need more legal information. They need a structured program that forces them to build their case, orient their strategy, and execute each filing — with AI-powered tools, expert guidance, and a community of peers who understand what they are going through. That is the LAW Accelerator.

Adapting the Model to Litigation Reality

Traditional startup accelerators run 12–16 weeks with a fixed cohort and a synchronized finish line. Litigation does not work this way. Cases last months to years. Members enter at different stages. Resolution comes through judgment, settlement, or dismissal on unpredictable timelines.

The LAW Accelerator adapts accordingly. The method is fixed; the timeline is the member's. The curriculum runs as long as the case runs. Community is organized around stages of the litigation lifecycle rather than cohort weeks. Milestones are celebrated when they happen — not at a fixed finish line.

SECTION 3

Method, Not Advice: The Regulatory Distinction

The line between legal information and legal advice is well-established in law. Providing legal information — explaining what the rules are, what procedures exist, what documents are typically filed in certain situations — is not the unauthorized practice of law. Applying law to a specific person’s facts and telling them what they should do is. This distinction has allowed court self-help centers, legal publishers, and form providers to operate for decades without crossing the line.

But there is a gap between these two poles that UPL doctrine does not directly address: the ability to use legal information effectively. A person can access the rules of civil procedure. They can read the elements of a breach of contract claim. The information is available. What they lack is a method — a structured way of thinking through their case so that when they encounter legal information, they know how to apply it to their own situation.

What the LAW Accelerator Provides

The LAW Accelerator does not tell members what to do. It teaches members how to think through what to do — using a structured method that mirrors how attorneys approach case preparation. The program helps members:

- **Ask the right questions.** The platform prompts members to identify what legal claims or defenses may be relevant to their situation, what elements must be proven, what facts they have, and what evidence supports those facts. These are the questions an attorney would ask. The member answers them.
- **Organize their own case.** Members input their own facts, upload their own documents, and map their own evidence to legal elements. The platform structures this work; it does not perform it.
- **Retrieve relevant legal information.** When a member has framed the right question — “What are the elements of this claim in my jurisdiction?” or “What does the rule say about this procedural step?” — the AI retrieves

accurate, jurisdiction-specific legal information. The member decides what to do with it.

- **Execute a deliberate process.** The Personal Practice of Law — the five-step method at the core of the program — does not tell members which filing is right for their case. It ensures that whatever they file is prepared the way an attorney would prepare it: with purpose, rule research, factual grounding, legal research, and argument practice.

Why This Is Not Legal Advice

Legal advice is the application of law to facts with a recommendation for action. The LAW Accelerator inverts this relationship. The member applies their own facts to the method; the AI provides legal information in response to the member's questions; the member decides what action to take. The platform is a structured environment for self-directed legal preparation, not a substitute for counsel.

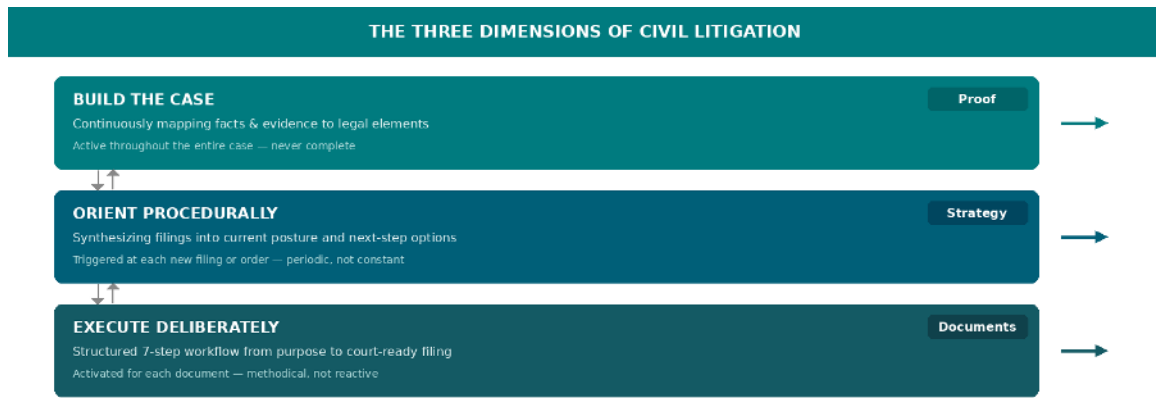
This design is deliberate. The transformation the program produces is competence, not compliance. Members learn to reason about their own cases. They become capable of asking the questions that elicit the information they need. They are not told what to file — they are equipped to figure it out.

The LAW Accelerator does not practice law. It teaches a method for practicing your own.

SECTION 4

The Three Dimensions of Civil Litigation

Competent civil litigation is not a linear workflow. Attorneys do not finish building the evidentiary record before developing strategy, or finish developing strategy before drafting documents. They work across three simultaneous, interdependent dimensions throughout the life of a case — each informing and strengthening the others.



Each dimension is active simultaneously and continuously informs the others.

The three dimensions of civil litigation — active simultaneously throughout every case.

Dimension 1: Build the Case Continuously

Every civil case rests on a foundation of provable facts linked to legal elements. A breach of contract claim requires a contract, a breach, and damages — and each of those elements must be supported by facts the court will credit and evidence that proves those facts are true. An eviction defense requires demonstrating a deficiency in the landlord’s case, the tenant’s compliance, or a procedural failure — and each argument must be grounded in the record.

Building this foundation is not a one-time act. New facts emerge throughout a case. Evidence is obtained, reviewed, and evaluated. The evidentiary weight behind each element often becomes clear only as facts accumulate and the full picture of the case comes into focus. Motions, orders, and discovery responses continuously reshape which facts are contested and which evidence will be decisive. A competent litigant is always building — continuously adding to the evidentiary record, mapping facts to legal elements, and assessing where the case is strong and where it is vulnerable.

Dimension 2: Orient Procedurally — Periodically

Civil procedure is a sequence of decision points. Each filing — complaint, answer, motion, discovery request, response, and even appellate brief — changes the procedural posture of the case and triggers a new set of options. What you file next depends on where you are procedurally, what the rules require or permit, what the opposing party has done, and what your strategic goals are.

Orientation is the work of assessing that posture after each change in the record and deciding, deliberately, what to do next. It is periodic rather than continuous

because the posture changes at discrete moments: when a complaint is filed, when an answer is due, when a motion is granted or denied, when discovery closes. Between those moments, the procedural posture is largely stable.

Most self-represented litigants fail at orientation. They respond to filings reactively, without understanding the full range of options or the strategic consequences of each choice. They miss filing windows because they do not know the clock is running. Purposeful orientation — grounded in AI-guided analysis of the procedural record — is what separates reactive litigants from strategic ones.

Dimension 3: Execute Deliberately

Execution is the preparation and filing of each legal document. It is the most visible dimension — the output that judges read and opponents respond to — but it is also the dimension most dependent on the other two. A document prepared without a clear factual or evidentiary foundation will be weakly argued. A document filed without understanding the procedural posture may be premature, untimely, or strategically counterproductive.

Deliberate execution follows a structured sequence: understand what the document is for and what it must accomplish; research the applicable rules and standards; take a legal position and select the facts, evidence, and case law that support it; draft a legal document arguing the position; and practice the oral argument before the hearing. This is the method attorneys use for every filing. It requires discipline that most self-represented litigants, operating under pressure and without guidance, rarely maintain on their own.

The transformation the LAW Accelerator produces is not the ability to draft a legal document. It is the ability to know what you can prove, understand where you stand procedurally, and act deliberately — filing by filing, hearing by hearing, throughout a case that may run for years.

Why the Three Dimensions Must Work Together

The three dimensions are interdependent. Building the case informs execution: a member who knows which elements are weakly supported knows what facts to emphasize and what evidence to obtain before filing. Orientation informs both: the procedural posture determines what type of document is needed and which facts are most relevant. Execution shapes the record — each filing adds to the procedural history that will inform future orientation and building decisions.

A program that addresses only one or two dimensions will fail. A document generation tool that ignores the record produces filings that look professional but argue from a weak foundation. A legal research tool that ignores the posture of the case produces research that is accurate but irrelevant. The LAW Accelerator is designed so that no dimension operates in isolation — each module feeds the others, and the program works because all three are active simultaneously.

SECTION 5

The LAW Accelerator: Program Structure

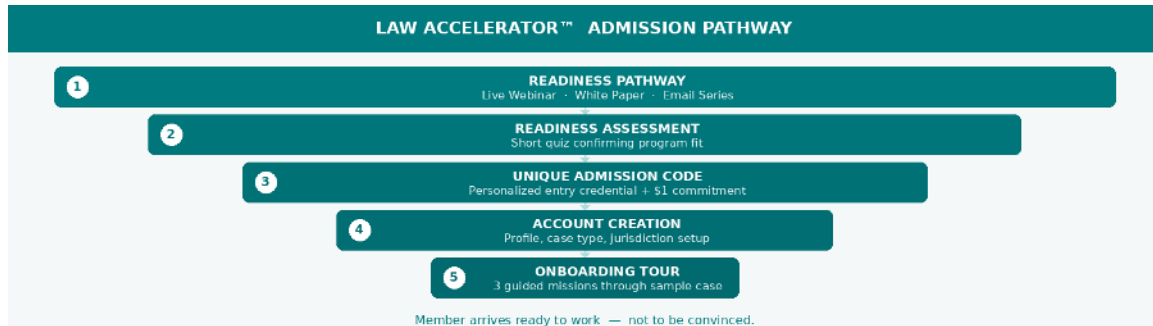
The LAW Accelerator is structured as a program, not a product. A product is available when you need it. A program is something you go through — with a defined entry, a structured path, and a community of peers. The LAW Accelerator has all three.

Admission: Preparing to Prepare

The Accelerator does not accept every applicant. Prospective members must complete one of three readiness pathways — a live webinar, a white paper, or a short email series — and pass a readiness assessment before receiving an admission code. This friction is intentional.

Litigation is procedural. The 5-step Personal Practice of Law — decide what to file, understand procedural rules, analyze claims and defenses, research relevant case law, draft and serve an effective legal document — is non-negotiable.

Generic AI tools are dangerous. Success requires focus and discipline. The admission process selects for members who have made that shift before they encounter the platform. The result is a member population that arrives prepared to work, which produces better outcomes and a stronger community.



The LAW Accelerator admission pathway: readiness, assessment, admission, onboarding.

Orientation: Learning by Doing

After account creation, new members do not begin with their own case. They complete a structured onboarding tour through a sample case — three guided missions, one for each module — that demonstrate what the program looks like in practice before they encounter the pressure of their own situation. Members who complete orientation arrive at their first filing session with a clear picture of the workflow they are about to follow.

The Curriculum: One Filing at a Time

The core curriculum is the Personal Practice of Law — the five-step method attorneys use for every filing, adapted for self-represented litigants and supported by AI at every step. Members do not take courses about law in the abstract. They prepare their actual case, filing by filing, using a workflow that teaches the method through practice.

Each document a member prepares runs them through the same structured sequence: align on purpose with an AI judge; research the applicable rules and take a comprehension quiz; select the facts and procedural history that support the filing; research relevant case law; generate the document from only reviewed sources; practice oral argument; complete a filing checklist. The method is consistent. The context changes with every filing. Members learn by doing, repeatedly, under real stakes.

Community: Peer Learning, Expert Access, and Milestone Celebration

The community provides what no tool can: the experience of not being alone. Monthly workshops led by the founders address the practical realities of civil litigation. Weekly office hours bring in outside legal experts — attorneys, court staff, and others with direct courtroom experience — giving members direct access to substantive guidance. Peer discussions organized around litigation stages connect members facing the same procedural moments. A participation leaderboard creates positive accountability.

The Learning Center is embedded within the Community, with courses covering a range of civil litigation topics — procedure, evidence, motion practice, trial skills, and more. Quizzes, course exams, and progress tracking make learning visible and measurable.

When a member achieves something meaningful — a motion granted, a damaging argument defeated, a settlement reached, a case resolved — they ring the bell. There is no required threshold and no single moment. Each ring generates a brief post to the community: what happened, what helped, what they would tell someone just starting. Over time, these posts form a library of real transformation, maintained by the people it was produced for.

SECTION 6

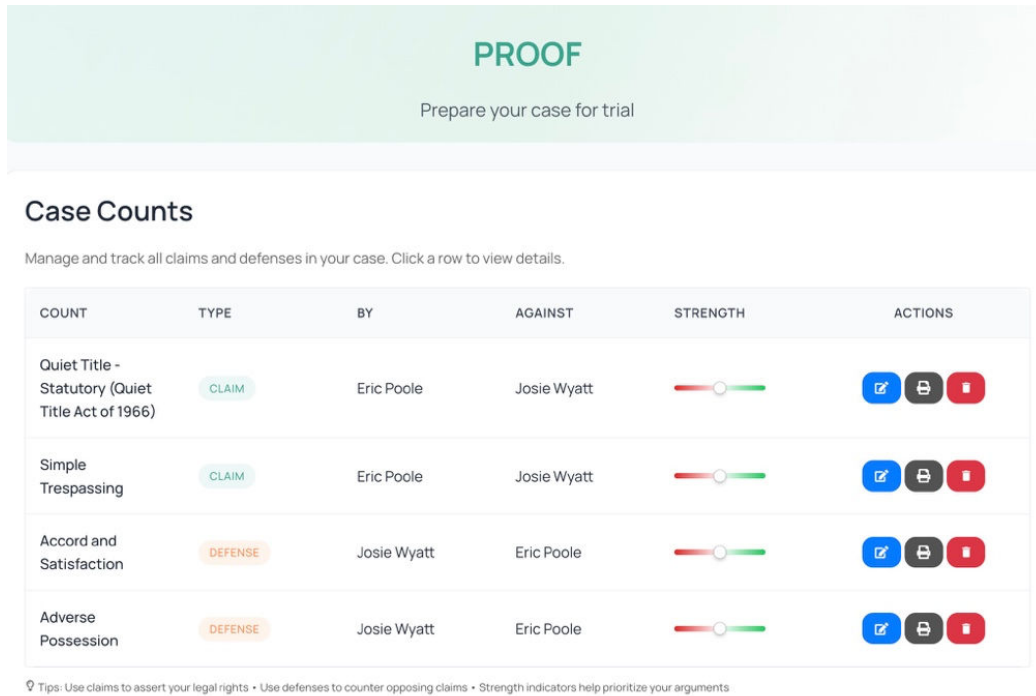
How the Platform Realizes the Structure

The three modules of the Courtroom5 platform — Proof, Strategy, and Documents — are not separate tools bundled together. Each is the operational expression of one of the three dimensions of civil litigation, and each is designed to be used throughout the case — not just at one stage.

Proof: The Case-Building Engine

Members build their case by uploading pleadings, describing what happened, or selecting from a jurisdiction-specific library of legal claims and defenses. However a member defines the facts of their case, the result is the same: every

claim and defense is organized around the specific elements that must be proven, and every fact and piece of evidence is mapped to those elements.



Proof: Counts Table — claims and defenses with real-time case strength indicators.

The platform shows the member, in real time, how well their case holds together. Elements without supporting facts are flagged. The member can see exactly which parts of their argument rest on solid ground and which need work — and that picture updates continuously as they build.

This is the information a competent litigant needs to make every other decision in the case: what evidence to obtain, what arguments to emphasize, what claims to pursue and which to abandon. Without it, strategy is guesswork.

← Back to Proof

CLAIM **Simple Trespassing**

Asserted by: **Eric Poole** Against: **Josie Wyatt**

Trespassing is the act of entering or remaining on another person's property without permission or lawful authority. Trespassing can occur on real property (land and buildings) or personal property (such as a vehicle).

+ Map Facts to Elements 7383 **Cost: 66** Use AI to automatically map 33 facts asserted by Eric Poole to elements, or map them below for free.

Expand all | Collapse all

- ▶ **Element 1. The plaintiff owned or possessed the subject property or has proof of title to vacant land.** 6 Facts 0 Evidence
- ▶ **Element 2. The defendant, knowingly and without authority, entered upon the premises of the plaintiff.** 5 Facts 0 Evidence
- ▶ **Element 3. The defendant received notice from the owner or an authorized representative of the property owner that such entry was forbidden.** 3 Facts 0 Evidence

[View all evidence for this count](#)

Proof: Trial Notebook — each element mapped to supporting facts and evidence.

Strategy: The Orientation Engine

Members upload their court filings to Strategy. The platform reads each document, produces a plain-English summary, and stores it in a chronological case record. As the record grows, the platform synthesizes all filings into a coherent overview of the case's history and current posture — and generates guidance on what the member might consider filing next, why each option is available, and what the tradeoffs are. The member can ask follow-up questions in a conversational interface tuned for the pro se litigation context.

STRATEGY

Decide where you're going

Case Summary

Case Overview: Eric Poole vs. Josie Wyatt

What the Case is About

This case involves a property dispute between Eric Poole and Josie Wyatt concerning a quarter-acre plot of land adjacent to Poole's residence in Marietta, Georgia. Poole claims ownership of the land, which he inherited from his grandmother. He alleges that Wyatt has trespassed on this property since 1998, enclosing it with a fence and making improvements without his consent. Poole seeks to establish his ownership rights and remove Wyatt's claims to the land.

Key Events and Filings

- 1. Complaint (Filed: April 29, 2020)**
 - Eric Poole filed a complaint against Josie Wyatt, asserting claims of civil trespass and an action to quiet title. He seeks damages for trespass and a court order to affirm his ownership rights.
- 2. Motion to Alter, Amend, or Correct Judgment (Filed: June 12, 2021)**
 - Poole filed this motion to amend a judgment issued on May 27, 2021, arguing that it did not reflect the court's verbal ruling prohibiting Wyatt from making permanent changes to the property during the appeal process.
- 3. Witness Subpoena (Issued: June 17, 2021; Served: June 25, 2021)**
 - A subpoena was issued requiring Josie Wyatt to appear in court as a witness for Poole on September 15, 2021. This document emphasizes her legal obligation to attend court.
- 4. Motion to Dismiss (Filed: August 9, 2023)**

Strategy: Case Summary with plain-English synthesis and procedural next-step guidance.

Each new upload triggers a full regeneration of the case summary and the procedural guidance. The member who opens Strategy after receiving an opposing motion sees a completely updated picture: what was just filed, how it changes the case, and what the response options are.

Documents: The Execution Engine

Before drafting, the member aligns on purpose with an AI judge and confirms they understand the rules that govern this document type. They then draw from their own Proof and Strategy records — selecting the specific facts, evidence, and procedural history that apply to this filing — rather than starting from a generic template. They research and select real case law from actual court opinions. The document is generated only from what the member has reviewed and approved. Before filing, they practice presenting the argument orally under simulated pressure.

DOCUMENTS

Communicate effectively in court.

Motion to Dismiss



✓ Filing Checklist

Here are a few reminders to ensure you get this procedure right:

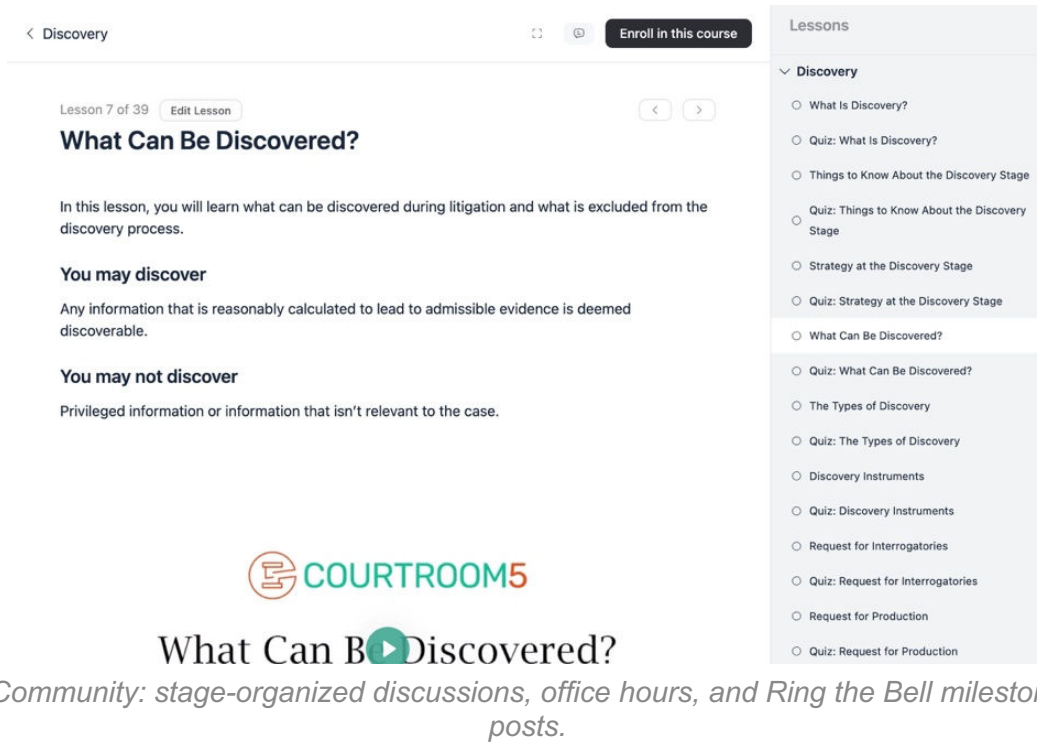
- Address legal sufficiency only
- Accept well-pleaded facts as true
- Cite applicable legal standards
- Consider all claims asserted
- Include supporting authorities
- File within time limits

Documents: selecting facts from Proof and filings from Strategy to ground the document.

The design principle is that the document is the product of the member's preparation, not of the platform. No cases are cited that have not been read. No facts are asserted that have not been confirmed. No procedural history is invoked that has not been uploaded to Strategy. The member who reaches the end of this process does not just have a document — they have a document they understand, can argue, and can defend under questioning from a judge.

Community and Learning: The Accountability Layer

The community provides the structured human environment that no software module can replace. Monthly workshops led by the founders bring practical litigation knowledge directly to members. Weekly office hours bring in outside attorneys, court staff, and other practitioners for direct Q&A. Peer discussions organized around case stages connect members who are facing the same procedural moments. A participation leaderboard and stage-organized discussion structure make engagement purposeful rather than passive.



The screenshot shows a user interface for a course. At the top left, there is a back arrow and the text '< Discovery'. In the top right, there is a refresh icon, a share icon, and a dark button that says 'Enroll in this course'. Below this, the main content area displays 'Lesson 7 of 39' with an 'Edit Lesson' link and navigation arrows. The title of the lesson is 'What Can Be Discovered?'. The text below the title reads: 'In this lesson, you will learn what can be discovered during litigation and what is excluded from the discovery process.' There are two sub-sections: 'You may discover' and 'You may not discover', each followed by a paragraph of text. At the bottom of the main content area is the Courthouse5 logo. To the right of the main content is a 'Lessons' sidebar with a dropdown arrow next to 'Discovery'. The sidebar lists several lessons and quizzes, with 'What Can Be Discovered?' highlighted in a darker grey background.

Lesson 7 of 39 [Edit Lesson](#) < >

What Can Be Discovered?


In this lesson, you will learn what can be discovered during litigation and what is excluded from the discovery process.

You may discover

Any information that is reasonably calculated to lead to admissible evidence is deemed discoverable.

You may not discover

Privileged information or information that isn't relevant to the case.



What Can Be Discovered?

Community: stage-organized discussions, office hours, and Ring the Bell milestone posts.

The Learning Center is embedded within the Community. Courses cover a range of civil litigation topics — procedure, evidence, motion practice, trial skills, and more — supported by quizzes, course exams, and progress tracking that make learning visible and measurable.

Ring the Bell posts form a growing library of real transformation stories. Each captures what happened, what helped, and the advice the member would give to someone just starting. This library is not marketing copy. It is a record of the change the program actually produces, maintained by the people changed by it.

SECTION 7

The Transformation

The access-to-justice crisis is real, large, and growing. The gap between legal need and legal representation is not closing. The tools that exist — forms, information, generic AI — have not produced the transformation their proponents promised. The gap is structural, and it requires a structural response.

The LAW Accelerator™ is that response. Not a tool. Not an information resource. Not a document generator. A program — built on the insight that what self-represented litigants lack is not access to legal content but access to a structured method, AI-powered tools that implement that method, and a community of peers and experts who have walked the same path.

The three dimensions of civil litigation — building the case continuously, orienting procedurally at each inflection point, and executing each filing deliberately — are not abstract principles. They are the operational logic of the platform. Proof builds. Strategy orients. Documents execute. Community and Learning provide the human accountability layer that no AI system can replace.

The members who complete this program do not just have better documents. They have a different relationship to their own cases. They understand what they can prove. They know where they stand. They act deliberately. They are not alone.

You will become capable. You will know exactly what to do. You will not be alone.

About Courtroom5

Courtroom5 is a Delaware Public Benefit Corporation headquartered in Durham, N.C. The company is a Techstars and Google for Startups graduate and has completed legal accelerator programs at the Duke Center on Law & Technology and LexisNexis. It has served more than 12,000 self-represented litigants across all 50 states. Co-founders Sonja Ebron (PhD, electrical engineering) and Debra Slone (PhD, library & information science) have each navigated serious civil litigation without an attorney many times. Their experience is the foundation of the program.

press@courtroom5.com · courtroom5.com