

# Don't Skip the Tutorial: The Value of "I Know This" CLEs

**Repeating tutorials of familiar games often sparks new strategies and possibilities that I had not previously considered. In the same fashion, participating in continuing legal education on previously mastered material can reveal gaps in my understanding or confirm the lack thereof. And that's valuable too.**

BY RYAN M. BILLINGS

The products put out by the electronic entertainment industry have grown increasingly complex, developing from the intuitive simplicity of Pong to software that often requires reading a 100-plus page manual just to understand the game. Because of this, today's games typically come with a tutorial to show you by example how to play. My wife is notorious for skipping the tutorial, wanting to dive right in and figure things out as she goes. I take the opposite approach.

Not only do I always complete the tutorial, but I also frequently go back to the tutorial on games I have mastered and repeat it. I have found that doing so often reveals small details or techniques that I did not realize or simply forgot due to lack of use. Even when I do not learn anything new from completing the tutorial, the descriptions offered or the way the information is presented often trigger new strategies and possibilities that I had not previously considered. I have the same experience with continuing legal education (CLE).

Lawyers generally have three choices when it comes to earning their required CLE credits: 1) they can take a course outside their core practice area, 2) they can take programs that represent cutting-edge developments in their primary fields, or 3) they can participate in programs that cover basic principles in a field they know well – the CLE equivalent of a game tutorial. (For the record, the State Bar of Wisconsin through its PINNACLE® program is the largest provider of CLE in Wisconsin and offers a wide selection in all three categories.)

I advocate taking all kinds of courses. And for the same reasons I sometimes repeat the tutorial, I recommend that lawyers do not neglect category three – what I call "I know this" CLEs.

Lawyers trade in subtlety and nuance, and there is enormous ground to cover in mastering even the law's narrowest of niches. I have found when taking I-know-this CLEs that the presenter might have a slightly different interpretation of a case, statute, or regulation that I had not before considered, or the presenter's description might spark new possibilities in my

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mind. Moreover, newer lawyers often groan when a senior partner says: "The law is X, find me a case that says that" because often X is not the law; either the law has changed since the last time the senior partner examined the issue, or there is a salient difference in the facts between the partner's past experience and the case at bar. Lawyers must constantly renew our understanding of even well-known principles if we are to maintain mastery.

So, I encourage lawyers to take I-know-this CLEs from time to time. You will often find that you learn something. Worst-case scenario: you will confirm that you do in fact know everything. **WL**



**Ryan M. Billings**, Harvard 2004, is a litigator at Kohner, Mann & Kailas S.C., Milwaukee, and chairs the firm's business litigation department. Access the digital article at [www.wisbar.org/wl](http://www.wisbar.org/wl). [rbillings@kmksc.com](mailto:rbillings@kmksc.com)