

Law School 101

How do I get into law school?

1. Get a four-year college degree

There is no “prelaw” major, so choose a major that interests you and in which you will excel; however, reading and writing are the two most important skills for succeeding in legal education and practice. Take courses that allow you to develop these skills.

Though major may not matter, GPA does. If necessary, start your college career slowly, taking only 9 or 12 credits rather than a full load. It is better to get 12 credits of A’s than 17 credits of C’s. Also, do not “pad” your schedule with easy courses to get good grades. Law schools pay attention not only to GPA and grade trends, but also to the difficulty of the courses taken. One of the least known aspects of the GPA issue is the LSAC readjustment of your grades—retakes don’t erase old grades, and all grades are weighted slightly differently (i.e. BYU A-: 3.7, LSAC A-: 3.67).

2. Take the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

The LSAT is offered four times each year: June, October, December, and February. Because many law schools use “rolling admissions” (they start reviewing applications as they arrive), your chance of being accepted to law school is best if you take the LSAT in June or October and submit all your applications by early November.

The LSAT is a time-intensive test that generally has 100 questions. The score is scaled from 120–180. No penalties are given for wrong answers. Each of the 35-minute sections is comprised of 20–28 multiple choice questions.

- *Logical Reasoning* (repeated twice): argument analysis
- *Reading Comprehension*: comparative reading and reading comprehension
- *Analytical Reasoning*: logic games

The LSAT is weighed heavily in the application review process, so it is important that you prepare seriously. Most students plan to study for about four months, 10–15 hours per week, and take an LSAT preparation class. You can also take old LSAT tests, which can be purchased at www.lsac.org.

3. Keep other factors in mind

Law schools are always looking to put together a diverse group of people. Other factors that law schools will look at include:

- Gender, ethnicity, and age
- Work experience
- Service, leadership, and international experience
- Legal experience
- Other extracurricular experience
- Reasons for wanting to attend law school

Make sure to work on your GPA and LSAT, but do not make the mistake of spending all your time with books. Expand your experience—get involved.

4. Use LSAC (www.lsac.org) to assemble the 6 items that comprise a law school application

- LSAT score
- Cumulative Undergraduate GPA

- Letters of Recommendation/Evaluations
- Résumé
- Personal Statement
- Applications specific to each law school

How long is law school?

Law school generally begins in August and runs during the fall and winter semesters for three years. Though some law schools offer courses during the spring or summer, most students work in legal internships during the summer break.

What would I learn about in law school?

First Year

Generally every first-year law student takes 15 credits of “core” legal courses (e.g. constitutional law, criminal law, property, torts, civil procedure, contracts, and legal writing). In these classes, you will read and discuss actual cases. You will learn how to “think like a lawyer” by looking analytically at arguments and finding their weaknesses, strengths, assumptions, etc.

Second and Third Years

Schools may require a few classes (e.g. professional responsibility) after the first year, but for the most part students are able to take classes in which they are most interested. For example, one student might enjoy business and take several business law classes. Another student might not know what they are interested in and choose to take a mix of different classes.

Summers

From May to August, students generally work in a legal setting such as a private firm, a government agency, or for a judge. This is the time for students to apply their academic knowledge to a real legal setting. A student’s eventual job after graduation is frequently the result of these summer experiences.

What can I do with a law degree?

Above all else, law school teaches you to think and express yourself clearly—skills that apply to almost any job. Although a law degree is flexible, part of a legal education is not just the schooling, but learning how to practice.