



Your Experts for Life

Pre-Law

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

MAJOR SELECTION AND COURSE RECOMMENDATIONS

Q: What should I major in if I am contemplating attending law school?

A: The American Bar Association, in its publication "Preparation for Legal Education," does not recommend any particular major for law school. In addition, there are no specific majors that law schools tend to prefer. Law students can major in anything from engineering to history to vocal performance. The important thing is to major in something you enjoy. Chances are, if you enjoy the subjects you are studying, you will do better than if you choose something just because you think it will get you into law school.

Comment: While a particular major is not important to a law school admissions committee, but good grades are important! Double majoring, however, has no bearing on your acceptance into law school.

Q: What courses should I take to prepare me for law school?

A: Law schools have no prerequisite courses for admission. However, while you are in college you may want to take courses that will help you as a law student. Such lawyering skills include analytical thinking and problem solving (logic), creative thinking, critical reading, developed written and oral communication, and research and task organization and management

Majors and Courses to help you develop lawyering skills are:

- Introduction to Logic
- Religion
- Introductory courses in History
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Criminology
- Psychology and/or Sociology
- English Composition
- Mathematics
- Speech or Public Speaking

Electives useful for pre-law students include Introduction to Interpersonal Communication or Introduction to Public Speaking. In general, any course that requires reading and writing is good for the pre-law student, but no particular course is required. Upper-level courses (which have prerequisites) that teach about the law include courses in Political Science and Criminology. Specifically, courses that use the Socratic method of teaching-just like law school-are considered useful. Other upper-level courses include Business Law, An introduction to Philosophy of Law, or Anthropology of Law. Remember, just because you take courses as an undergraduate in law, does not make you a stronger applicant or a better law student.

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Q: What does a law school focus on for admission purposes?

A: Your undergraduate grade point average (GPA) and your Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) score are the two primary factors used to determine law school admission. Secondary factors include part-time work, extra curricular activities, and diversity issues. These areas are given slight weight, but they are not as important as the numbers.

Q: How important are extracurricular activities for law schools admissions?

A: Although extracurricular activities are as important as your GPA and LSAT score, law schools do look for "well-rounded" applicants and one way to become "well-rounded" is to get involved in campus or community activities. Choose organizations that interest you because those are the ones that will make your collegiate experience more meaningful. However, you need to keep in mind that your GPA is more important than campus involvement, so never sacrifice your grades by becoming over-committed with extracurricular activities.

Q: What are the parts of a law school application?

A: Generally, law school applications consists of the following:

- 1) The application itself that can be obtained from each individual law school;
- 2) Your LSAT score and undergraduate transcript that will be sent to law schools by Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS);
- 3) Your letters of recommendation from professors and if you have any, employers; and
- 4) Your personal statement, which plays an important part in rounding out your application and is considered your interview on paper.

Q: How should I go about obtaining letters of recommendation?

A: You should plan to get at least two academic references from professors, and the third letter should be from either a professor or another source (employer, advisor, clergy, etc.). You should ask them, "Would you be comfortable writing me a strong letter of recommendation?" Hopefully the answer is honest--if they say no, do not be offended and ask someone else. The actual content of the letter is much more important than the status of the letter-writer to the law school admissions committee. Be sure to give your recommender a copy of your transcript, a resume, and your personal statement, along with the cover sheet from the LSDAS Letter of Recommendation Service.

Q: What is Law School Admission Council (LSAC) letter service, what is that?

A: The letter of recommendation service is offered as a convenience to LSDAS subscribers, recommendation letter writers, and the LSDAS-participating law schools. The LSDAS fee includes up to three letters of recommendation to be received and processed by LSAC. The service is designed for general letters; some schools accepting letters through LSDAS may prefer that letters be sent directly to them particularly letters attesting to a candidate's specific qualifications to study at their school. Please consult law school application materials regarding letter instructions.

Individual letters may be sent directly to the law schools (or can be included with the student's application in a sealed, signed envelope). Law schools suggest that faculty include the student's identification and a cover sheet from the law school application if possible. Some law schools will review the student's file even if the letters have not arrived, so faculty should be prompt with sending these letters.

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST (LSAT)

Q: Where do I find more information on preparing for the LSAT?

A: You can find links to commercial courses, an online workbook and other materials such as past LSAT tests from the Internet Legal Resource Guide and Law Services. Private review companies have information about the LSAT preparation, including Kaplan and Princeton Review, which have offices located in Gainesville. Another option is with Home LSAT, a full video program for LSAT review.

Q: When should I take the LSAT?

A: Since law schools have a rolling admission acceptance policy, it is to your benefit to get your application in as soon as law schools start accepting them (usually around October 1 for fall applicants and May 15 for spring applicants). Therefore, taking the LSAT exam before your senior year or as early into your senior year as possible is preferable. However, because law schools average LSAT scores, it is important to be as prepared as possible the first time you take the exam. Do not choose an earlier test date if you are not prepared. You should take the LSAT exam the calendar year before you plan to start law school. If you plan to begin Fall 2005, you should take the June or October 2004 administration of the LSAT.

Q: How do I prepare for the LSAT?

A: Since all LSAT testing attempt scores are averaged, you need to be as prepared as possible the first time you take it. There has been no statistical evidence that shows students that take review courses do better than students who don't. These courses can be expensive (\$1000+), therefore, you may want to buy several LSAT preparation books first to evaluate whether or not you can improve your score by studying on your own. However, if it would make you feel better just knowing you took a review course then, by all means, take one. The important thing is that you feel as prepared and confident as possible when exam day arrives. A good resource is the ability to order old LSAT exam from Law Services (with answers!).

CHOOSING A LAW SCHOOL

Q: How can I find out what schools offer a particular area of law, like patent or international?

A: The best place to start is the directory of United States (US) American Bar Association Approved Law Schools. You may also try The Internet Legal Resource Guide, which has some areas of law listed with the appropriate schools.

Q: How can I find schools most likely to accepted me?

A: Law Services also provides access to materials such as the Official Guide to US Law Schools with admission profiles to most US law schools (upper tier schools i.e. Yale and Columbia do not provide profiles.) You may purchase this book for around \$20 from Law Services. Also, the Boston College Online Law School Locator has a matrix by median GPA and median LSAT score as reported by law schools. You just click on the category in which your scores fit, to view schools that fall within your range.

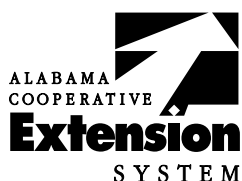
Q: How do I learn more about individual law schools?

A: One source to find links to home pages from law schools (and law-related programs), is through the ABA . You can learn more about each school and often request admission material online

Q: Where do I find rankings for law schools?

A: There are many types of rankings for law schools, ranging from personal rankings to the US News and World Report Standings.

Note: It is very important to understand that all rankings are subjective and there is a large problem with the methodology in most rankings. View this validity report that assesses the flaws in ranking systems.



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