

Pre-Law FAQs for Freshmen and Sophomores

What are “Pre-Law” studies?

We use the expression “pre-law” as a convenient way to describe the training, education, and experiences that precede the formal study of law. However, there is no fixed path to law school. Since the success and effectiveness of your future legal training will depend on the breadth, depth, and quality of your undergraduate education, you would be wise to take a wide variety of traditional and demanding academic courses.

What major and/or courses should I choose?

There are no required courses to take as a prerequisite for admission to law school. The American Bar Association does not recommend a particular major, and law schools do not prefer a specific major. Therefore, you should opt for a major and courses you enjoy, and in which you will excel. This is a practical approach since such choices will generally result in a higher grade point average (a critically important criterion for admission to law school). Additionally, there is a quality-of-life consideration: your undergraduate years should not be spent taking course after course in a major that you do not enjoy!

Your transcript should reflect a broad educational background, and you do want to **be certain to choose a major and courses that will sharpen your skills in reading, researching, writing, oral communication, and critical analysis.** Do not overload on courses with the word “law” in the title; however, you may wish to take one or two such courses, e.g., Judicial Process or Constitutional Law.

What are the basic requirements for admission to law school?

A bachelor's degree without any qualification as to courses or major is all that is required. No particular courses are specified, nor is there a preferred major. You will also need to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

What do law schools ask of an applicant beyond the fact that s/he has a bachelor's degree?

First, a high grade point average (GPA) and a strong score on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Law schools will also consider, to a much lesser extent: the personal statement, letters of recommendation,* undergraduate institution, grade trends, difficulty of undergraduate courses, work experience, graduate degrees, extracurricular activities, and writing skill (as exhibited by the personal statement and LSAT writing sample).

** It is essential that you establish ties early in your academic career with faculty members who later may write letters of recommendation for you.*

What is the LSAT?

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day standardized test required for admission to all law schools that are members of the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). It provides a standard measure of acquired reading and verbal reasoning skills that law schools can use as one of several factors in assessing applicants. The test is administered four times a year at hundreds of locations.

The LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: reading and comprehension; the organization and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it; the ability to reason critically; and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and arguments of others.

When do I take the LSAT?

The test is offered four times a year, in February, June, September/October, and December. The Office of Pre-Law Advising recommends taking the June test between your junior and senior year or the September/October test at the start of your senior year. See the Law School Admission Council's web site at <http://www.lsac.org/> for more information about the LSAT.

When should I apply to law school?

Applying to law school is a very time-consuming process. Most law school applications are due in January or February. You should contact the various law schools that interest you to obtain their standard information and application materials as early as possible (i.e. in the summer or fall the year before you plan to attend law school). This is to avoid having to rush to get things together at the last minute, which increases the likelihood of mistakes. Starting early also allows you to provide writers of your letters of recommendation with the necessary material well before applications are due. Read the materials the law schools publish very carefully, and ***follow the directions.***