

# **Pre-Law FAQs for Juniors and Seniors**

## **What is the LSAT?**

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a half-day standardized test required for admission to all ABA–approved law schools. 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 LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: the reading and comprehension of complex texts with accuracy and insight; the organization and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it; the ability to think critically; and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and arguments of others.

## **Should I enroll in a commercial LSAT test prep course?**

While prep courses can be very helpful, they are also quite expensive. Whether or not you choose to enroll in a commercial course depends a lot on your individual circumstances. The length of the course, the material provided and the size of the class vary greatly from company to company, so the Office of Pre-Law Advising strongly recommends that you do some research before you sign up. You can start by researching the links provided on <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/prelaw/links.php>.

If the expense of a prep course is too onerous and you are self-disciplined, you should purchase an LSAT prep book and begin taking practice tests on a regular basis. Plan several months ahead and create a study schedule for yourself, using the LSAT prep book and other materials from the LSAC as your guide. There are a number of practice test books in the OPLA library, and the Office of Pre-Law Advising sponsors at least one free practice LSAT each semester. Be sure you have signed up for the pre-law listserv so you will get advance notice of the practice LSAT sessions. You can subscribe to the prelaw listserv by going to <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/prelaw/listserv.php> and following the directions.

## **How many times should I take the LSAT?**

In 2006 most law schools switched from always or nearly always averaging to always or nearly always taking the higher LSAT score. If you are applying to a law school that takes the higher LSAT score or takes the higher score with a good explanation, retake the test if you have any reason to think your LSAT score is unrepresentative. Be aware, though, that you may not take the LSAT more than three times in any two-year period. This policy applies even if you cancel your score or it is not otherwise reported.

## **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 school publishes very carefully, and **follow the directions**.

## **Where should I go to law school?**

You should apply to law schools that have been accredited by the American Bar Association. You will want to concentrate on applying to law schools where you are likely to be admitted. Comparing your GPA and LSAT scores to the median (middle) scores of recent admittees to specific law schools will give you a rough sense of your chances for admission. It is often advisable to go to law school in the geographic area where you plan to practice, as contacts made during law school are invaluable later, and many law schools are more adept at placing their graduates in the city/state/region in which the law school is located. Do your research! Contact the various law schools that interest you to obtain their standard information and application materials. Read the materials the law school publishes very carefully, and, if you are able, visit the law schools you are considering. You can also research law schools by going to the searchable edition of the *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* maintained by the Law School Admission Council at <http://officialguide.lsac.org/>.

## **I made terrible grades during my freshman year, but I learned from my mistakes. Will the fact that my grades improved help me?**

Yes. Admissions committees look for the "upward trend." Many students get off to a bad start and show improvement later. It's best to get good grades right from the beginning, but the next best scenario is to get better and better grades each semester.

## **What are the main factors law schools consider in an application?**

The primary factors are the applicant's score on the **Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)** and **Grade Point Average (GPA)**. Law schools vary in the relative level of importance they place on these two criteria, though most seem to weight the LSAT score more heavily. Law schools will also consider, to a much lesser extent: the personal statement, letters of recommendation, undergraduate institution, grade trends, major and difficulty of courses, work experience, graduate degrees, extracurricular activities, and writing skill (as exhibited by the personal statement and LSAT writing sample). Additionally, most publicly funded law schools bias their admissions decisions in favor of residents of the state in which the school is located.