



LA Civil Rights

LACR Pre-Law Resource Guide

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Welcome!

Dear Prospective Law Student,

Are you ready to begin your pre-law journey but don't know where to start? This comprehensive Pre-Law Resource Guide is designed to help you navigate the complexities of the Law School Application process and prepare you for your legal journey! Designed to serve as your roadmap, this guide offers invaluable insights into law school admissions, LSAT preparation, and financing your legal education. Whether you're a college freshman or a working professional seeking a career change, this resource is tailored to assist you every step of the way.

I know navigating the law school admissions process can be challenging, filled with complex information about academic, financial, and professional considerations. Rest assured, you're not alone on this journey. As someone who has walked in your shoes, I believe in your potential to succeed. This guide aims to equip you with the knowledge and confidence needed to make your legal dreams a reality. If you're able to lean on this legal journey, do it! We need your lived experiences and commitment to make this world a better place. LACR will be here to cheer you on and lift you as you prepare for this next level.

Keep the faith and keep the fight!

Capri Maddox, Esq.

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About the LA Civil Rights Department

The LA Civil Rights Department (LACR) seeks to maintain and strengthen the city's diversity, equity, and accountability efforts. LACR is committed to reducing bias, addressing injustices, and leveling the playing field for underrepresented communities in Los Angeles through increased community engagement, equity initiatives, and upward mobility programming, such as LA Law Day, LA Medical Day, and more.

LACR is excited to represent the city's diversity and fight to create a better LA For All. The department hopes to inspire community members to advocate for their community and lead their neighbors toward a better tomorrow. For more information about the LACR and ways to get involved, please visit LAisForEveryone.com



INTRODUCTION



UNLOCKING YOUR LEGAL POTENTIAL

Before we discuss the details of the law school application process, you should focus on the most critical question—why law school? In order to achieve your goals, you need to know your **“why!”** Knowing you want to be a lawyer is a great first step, but the law school application process will require you to think critically about your **WHY**. What about law school or the legal field piques your interest? Are you looking for a career change? Are you interested in helping your community in a meaningful way? Are you interested in politics? Or maybe you have always wanted to be a lawyer, but didn’t know where to start! Whatever the reason, make sure you understand your **why** so you have your goals in mind while crafting your application!

IS LAW SCHOOL FOR ME?

Short answer –yes! Deciding to attend law school is a choice that requires thoughtful consideration of your interests, strengths, and career aspirations. Law school is for anyone willing to work hard and commit to the rigorous academic and professional demands it requires. A law degree can open doors to various careers that encompass different sectors of society, such as human and civil rights, government, medicine, technology, entertainment, sports, and academia, to name a few. Prospective applicants with strong analytical, written, verbal, and oral skills are especially strong candidates for a JD. Many individuals find a legal degree appealing because of its ability to create lasting social change and make a positive impact on an individual level and society as a whole. In order to best gauge if law school is right for you, consider the following:

- **Why law?** What draws you to the legal profession? It’s okay if you do not have a firm answer yet; consider your motivations and interests in pursuing a legal career!
- **What are your skills and strengths?** Do you have the tenacity needed to perform well in law school?
- **Have you considered the costs associated with law school?** Consider the financial implications associated with a legal career and the sacrifices you might have to make.

THE LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION



LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION OVERVIEW

The law school application consists of several components that will provide the admissions committee with a comprehensive overview of your academic background, qualifications for law school, and motivations for pursuing a legal career. The components are designed to let the admissions committee learn more about you and your legal aspirations. The application consists of a personal statement, LSAT score, undergraduate transcripts, letters of recommendation, resume/curriculum vitae (CV), optional essays/statements, and addenda.

Components of the Application

Personal Statement (PS)

The personal statement is one of the most important components of your application. This is your opportunity to explain to the admissions committee why you want to go to law school and how you will help the legal profession. Use your essays to showcase your unique qualities, lived experiences, abilities, and reasons for pursuing a legal education. This is the time to brag (professionally of course!) about your achievements (academic/professional) and highlight your passion for law!

LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a standardized exam designed to assess skills associated with success in law school. Your LSAT score is **extremely important** in the admission process, as it helps schools evaluate your academic potential and readiness for legal scholarship.

Undergraduate Transcripts

Law school requires official undergraduate transcripts from **ALL** universities you have attended. Your academic record provides admission committees with information about your academic performance, course selection, GPA, and the rigor of your undergraduate program. Having a formidable academic record can make you a stronger candidate for competitive law schools. Once you graduate your undergraduate GPA is set. Therefore, do all you can to protect your GPA during your undergrad school years.

THE LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION



LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Components of the Application

Letters of Recommendation

Law Schools typically require 2 - 4 letters of recommendation for the law school application process. If you are applying to law school immediately after undergrad, at least ONE of your letters of recommendation should come from a professor. If you are applying post-grad, recommendation letters can come from employers, volunteer supervisors, or anyone else (outside of family), who can attest to your abilities, character, and potential for success in law school.

Letters of recommendation are really important because they provide insight into your academic achievements, interpersonal skills, work ethic, and suitability for a legal career. Choose individuals who can write a **STRONG** letter of recommendation and really provide concrete examples to support their endorsements.

Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV):

Your resume or CV should detail your educational background, work experience, extracurricular activities, leadership roles, volunteer work, and other relevant accomplishments. Your resume should highlight meaningful experiences to you and, if possible, demonstrate your commitment to law and the legal industry.

THE LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION



LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Components of the Application

Optional Essays/ Statements

First things first — I know they may say these essays are optional, but they are not. If the law school offers another opportunity to show your writing skills, highlight your character, or demonstrate your passion for law, take it! These optional essays often allow you to address specific topics, such as diversity, overcoming adversity, or explaining a significant gap in your academic record. If you choose to write an optional essay, make sure you are incorporating new information that cannot be found elsewhere in your application. You can also use these essays to expand on a personal hardship that shaped you or highlight a meaningful experience that captures the essence of who you are.

Addenda

Addenda are supplemental statements that allow you to address specific aspects of your application that may require further explanation or clarification. Common topics, include LSAT score fluctuations, academic performance trends, or significant life events that have impacted your educational journey. The addenda should be concise and factual, providing context without making excuses. ***Do not use this space to highlight insignificant information.***

Ultimately, a well-prepared law school application includes all of the required information (LSAT, transcripts, resume/CV, personal statement), optional essays, and an addenda if needed! A strong application requires proper planning and time to craft. Please do not wait until the last minute to create your application! Quality work takes time! The more thoughtful and considerate you are, the better your chances are of getting into your dream schools. Your lived experiences matter, take the time needed to craft a thoughtful application.

SCHOOL SELECTION



HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOU?

Choosing the right schools to apply to requires thoughtful consideration of a variety of factors to ensure your school selection is a good fit for your **academic, professional, and personal goals**.

Evaluate Your Academic Profile

When selecting schools to apply to, consider your undergraduate GPA and LSAT score, as these are two crucial components the law school admission committee will examine. Before applying to any school, make sure you research the median GPA and LSAT for admitted students to better gauge where you stand as a potential applicant. Place your schools in three tiers (**Safety, Target, and Reach**).

Safety schools are schools where your GPA and LSAT scores fall above the 75th percentile of admitted students. You have a strong chance of acceptance at these schools, making them **safer** options in your application process.

Target schools are law schools where your GPA and LSAT scores align with the 50th percentile of admitted students. You have a competitive chance of acceptance at these schools, making them realistic targets for your application.

Reach schools are law schools where your GPA and LSAT scores fall below the 25th percentile of admitted students. While these schools may be more challenging to gain acceptance to, they offer the potential for a higher reward in terms of prestige and opportunities.

SCHOOL SELECTION



HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOU?

Personal Considerations

In addition to considering your academic profile, consider your career goals and personal preferences. Consider factors such as ideal jobs, location, faculty-to-student ratio, and program concentrations and specialties. Make sure you research all prospective schools you're considering, carefully considering their ranking, ABA accreditation status, reputation, bar passage rates, employment outcomes, and strength of alumni networks.

Finally, make sure to consider the cost and financial aid available to you! Always evaluate the cost of tuition, living expenses, and available financial aid options at each law school. If possible, try to visit campuses or attend virtual events. By carefully considering the factors, you can create a good list of prospective schools that best align with your goals and preferences. Creating a tailored list will ensure you attend a school that will set you on the most successful path for law.

Choosing a law school is no easy feat, and truly requires thoughtful consideration about your future.

ALL ABOUT THE LSAT



COMPONENTS OF THE LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a standardized exam designed to assess the reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and analytical reasoning skills essential for success in law school. It consists of multiple-choice questions and a writing sample, with each section serving a specific purpose in evaluating a candidate's aptitude for legal studies. The LSAT is comprised of four 35-minute test sections. Between the second and third sections, there is a 10-minute intermission. **Please note that those with accommodations may have additional time.*

As of August 2024, the LSAT consists of two Logical Reason (LR) sections, One Reading Comprehension (RC) section, and one unsecured section of either LR or RC.

COMPONENTS OF THE LSAT EXPLAINED

Logical Reasoning: This section of the exam will test your ability to critically evaluate and analyze arguments. You'll be presented with short passages and asked to identify assumptions, draw conclusions, and recognize logical flaws within the arguments.

Reading Comprehension: This section measures your ability to understand and analyze complex texts similar to those encountered in law school. You'll be asked questions about the main ideas, details, and structures of the passages provided, demonstrating your comprehension and critical reading skills.

Writing Sample: While the LSAT writing sample is not scored, they are heavily considered by law school admission committees when reviewing prospective applicants' applications. The writing sample provides law schools with an example of your ability to construct a reasoned argument and communicate effectively. You'll be given a prompt and asked to present a well-reasoned argument supporting or opposing a given position.

FINANCING YOUR LEGAL EDUCATION



PAYING FOR LAW SCHOOL

There's no beating around the bush; law school is **extremely expensive**. The average cost of attending law school can range anywhere from \$150,000 - \$300,000. When applying to law school it is important to develop a financial strategy that includes creating a realistic budget that includes tuition, living expenses, and other relevant costs. As you embark on your educational journey, it is paramount that you create a comprehensive strategy that will help you manage these expenses realistically. Your budget should encompass repayment options, financial aid packages, and anticipated future income based on your legal specialty and location. Keep in mind, depending on your legal specialty, location salaries can vary. Questions to consider while choosing a legal specialty are:

- **What** fields are growing the most rapidly?
- **What** is the range of salaries of people in my area and field? Consider the low, average, and high salaries.
- **What** are the job prospects like in the area of law I want to study? Consider location as well.

By carefully evaluating this information, you can make the most informed decision that aligns best with your interests, skills, and financial goals, ensuring the best financial career path for you. Now that you have considered those questions, we can delve into the primary funding options available for law school.

The primary funding options in law school financial aid packages are scholarships, grants, and loans.

Scholarships & Grants

Scholarships and grants are “free” money that you do not need to pay back. They can come from your school's financial aid package or outside organizations. Grants and scholarships are often dispersed in two categories: Merit-based and need-based. Merit-based scholarships are awarded to students for outstanding academic achievement, talents, leadership ability, and other characteristics. Need-based scholarships are awarded on the basis of the demonstrated financial need of the student. Colleges will use your FAFSA to determine state and federal eligibility for additional money.

FINANCING YOUR LEGAL EDUCATION



PAYING FOR LAW SCHOOL (CONTINUED)

Loans:

Student loans are the most popular way students finance their legal education and prove to be a powerful aspect of many law school financial aid packages. Many students rely on loans to help cover necessary expenses such as tuition, books, living expenses, and other educational costs.

Federal Student Loans:

Stafford and Grad PLUS loans are popular choices due to their low-interest rates and flexible repayment options. These loans can help bridge the gap between your financial aid and the total cost of attendance. **Note: Students attending non-accredited law schools are NOT eligible for federal student loans.**

Private Student Loans:

While federal loans are often preferable, private student loans from banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions can supplement your financial aid package as needed. Always compare interest rates, repayment terms, and other factors to ensure you're making the best decision. In addition to scholarships, grants, and loans, many students consider working part-time or securing a paid internship during law school. Part-time employment can provide students with practical experience and earn income by working in positions that are working in their fields of study.

Employer Tuition Reimbursement Programs:

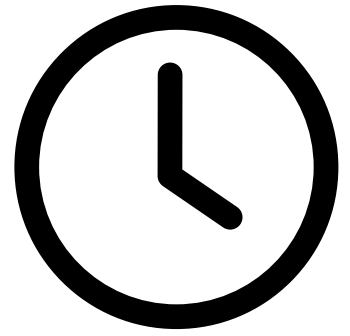
These programs can be a valuable resource if you are a law student interested in attending school part-time and are already working in a law-related field. Many employers offer full or partial reimbursement for tuition, books, and other educational expenses.

Budgeting:

As previously mentioned, creating a realistic budget and closely managing your finances can help you successfully navigate the financial challenges of law school. The resources section has links to helpful budgeting templates and tips for saving money as a student. Proper budgeting and money management will ensure you can pursue your legal education without feeling overwhelmed by the high costs associated with it. [Post Bar/post grad]

Financing your law school education may be difficult, but it is most certainly not impossible. By utilizing careful budgeting and comprehensive financial planning, you can make the best decisions for your circumstances.

LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION



TIMELINE

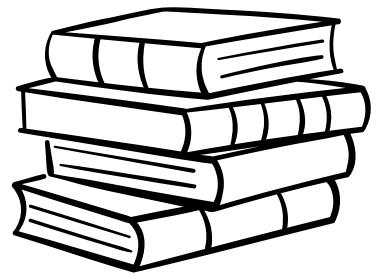
The law school application process typically begins one year before the year you plan to enroll in law school. For instance, if you plan to attend law school immediately after undergrad, you need to start preparing your application during the spring of your junior year and plan to submit it during the fall of your senior year. It is **strongly recommended** that prospective applicants apply as early as possible to maximize their chances of admission. In the spring of your application year, your first steps should include creating an LSAC account and registering with Credential Assembly Services (CAS).

After registering for your first LSAT exam, you should begin researching different laws that pique your interest. Make sure to compile a diverse mix of perspective schools (mix of safety, reach, and target schools). This is also a great time to begin identifying potential recommenders. begin identifying who you want to ask for a letter of recommendation.

In the summer of your application year, ask for a letter of recommendation (LOR) from your recommender and make sure you provide your recommenders with your most up-to-date resume. During the summer, continue studying for the LSAT if you are not satisfied with your first score (most students retake the LSAT 2 - 3 times!) and begin preparation for your personal statements.

Make sure to finish gathering all necessary documents for your application (transcripts, letter of recommendation, resume/CV, and supplemental essays). After submitting your applications, make sure to celebrate your hard work!

ALL ABOUT THE BAR



After law school, you have one last hurdle — **the bar exam**, which is your ticket to officially practicing law as a licensed attorney. It is **challenging** and comes with a hefty price tag. However, do not fear! With thorough preparation and budgeting, you'll be ready to sit for the exam and prepare to launch your legal career. *Please note:* dedicating time to bar prep is imperative because to pass the bar, you must have a solid understanding of the law, including foundational principles, legal theories, and the exceptions to those rules.

What is the Bar Exam?

The bar exam is a standardized test that prospective attorneys must pass to become licensed to practice law in a specific state or region.

Scope of the California Bar Exam

In California, you must pass the bar exam to practice law. The California Bar Exam is held over two days and consists of the following:

Written Portion: The written portion consists of **five essay questions** and a **Performance Test (PT)**. Three essay questions are asked in the morning, and the remaining two in the afternoon, followed by the performance test, a 90-minute written assignment requiring you to complete a “real-world” lawyer task. The performance test packet will contain a task memo, a file, and a library. This portion tests seven subjects: Business Association, Civil Procedure, Community Property, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Evidence, Professional Responsibility, Real Property, Torts, Trusts, and Wills and Succession.

Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ): The MCQ portion of the General Bar Examination is an objective six-hour examination containing 200 questions. The multiple-choice portion is typically administered on the second day, with 100 questions given in the morning (divided into two morning sessions) and 100 questions given in the afternoon (divided into two afternoon sessions). This portion tests seven subjects: Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Evidence, Real Property, and Torts.

PAYING FOR THE BAR



Paying for the bar exam is a significant financial commitment. Common costs include bar review courses (\$2,500 - \$4,000), study materials (\$500 - \$1,000), registration fees (\$700 - \$1,000 in California), and lifestyle adjustments (e.g., reducing work hours). Overall, you should expect to budget \$5,000 - \$6,000 for bar prep. Though the costs are high, this is an **investment in your future**. Financial aid options, such as scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness programs, are available to help. Be sure to plan your finances carefully to minimize stress during your preparation.

Other Costs to Consider:

Bar Review Courses: For many law students, bar review courses are the most significant expense for bar prep. A robust course should provide comprehensive study materials, lectures, lecture notes, practice exams, and access to online resources. Prices for bar prep courses can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, depending on the courses you choose and the level of preparation you need! The most popular providers (e.g., Barbri, Themis, Kaplan) offer comprehensive prep courses, but there are also more affordable options. Some students decide to study independently in lieu of a formal bar review course, which is fine, so long as you **STUDY** for at least 60 days before the exam!

Study materials: Study materials can consist of bar review books, flashcards, and other materials. Consider purchasing used books or using free resources, like bar prep forums or law school libraries, to offset costs.

Registration fees: Like many standardized exams, you must pay to take the test. The fees associated with the California Bar Exam are approximately \$1,000, but this cost does not include fees for other requirements, like the Moral Character application. Register as early as possible to avoid late fees, and confirm if your school offers any reimbursement options for these fees.

FAQs

Whether you are just beginning your pre-law journey or deep in the Law School application process, this Frequently Asked Questions section is here to answer any lingering questions you may have!

Do I need a specific major to apply for law school?

Nope! Unlike certain graduate school programs like medical school or psychology, any major is acceptable for law school. Law schools do, however, want applications that exhibit strong foundational skills and prospective applicants' potential to succeed in law school.

What foundational skills are law schools looking for?

Law school requires a variety of strong skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, strong writing skills, oral communication skills, time management, research abilities, commitment, and a desire to serve others.

Are there any classes that can prepare me for law school?

Classes that strengthen your writing and logical reasoning skills are always helpful. If possible, try to take at least one intensive writing English class (especially classes focused on law and policy) and Philosophy classes centered around critical thinking and logic. These classes will better prepare you for the LSAT.

Should I pay for a tutor or self-study?

There is no inherent advantage to paying for an LSAT tutor. At the end of the day, your LSAT score is based on your level of discipline and willingness to study. Both options have pros and cons. Consider the type of student you are and the support you need!

Do you trust yourself to create a study plan and stick to it? Or do you study better with a strict regimen? For more advice, check out this [helpful guide](#) on self-studying for the LSAT.

What is the difference between early decision and non-binding early action?

Early Decision (ED) is binding; early action (EA) is not. With ED, students can apply to one school and promise to commit should they be accepted. Early Action is non-binding and allows students to submit multiple early applications without a commitment to attend.

FAQs

Whether you are just beginning your pre-law journey or deep in the Law School application process, this Frequently Asked Questions section is here to answer any lingering questions you may have!

What do HYS, CNN, and T-14 stand for?

Common pre-law abbreviations are

HYS: Harvard, Yale, Stanford

CCN: Chicago, Columbia, NYU

T-14: Top 14 law schools in the US

T-30: Top 30 law schools in the US

K-JD: (Kindergarten - Law School)

PS: Personal Statement

LOR: Letters of Recommendation

LOCI: Letter of Continued Interest

How many times can I take the LSAT?

You can take the LSAT a total of **seven times over your lifetime**, and no more than **five times in a reportable score period**. In a single testing year, you can take the LSAT three times in a single testing year from July to June. Visit the [LSAC website](#) to learn more about testing policies.

How do law school admissions committees review multiple LSAT scores?

When you apply to law school, the admissions committee will receive a copy of every LSAT score. Some schools take the average score while other schools use the highest score. Contact prospective schools if you have specific questions about the admissions process.

What is the difference between an accredited and unaccredited law school?

Accredited law schools have a curriculum that meets the standards of the American Bar Association (ABA), while unaccredited schools do not. Students who attend unaccredited law schools do not qualify for federal grants and may have a harder time preparing for the bar exam upon graduation. Additionally, students who attend unaccredited law schools have low earning potentials, lower bar passage rates, and may have a hard time finding full time employment upon graduation. Please view this [report](#) for additional information.

Resources

****Disclaimer: All resources listed herein are provided for informational purposes ONLY. They are not affiliated with the Los Angeles Civil Rights Department and are based solely on personal choice and recommendations. All students are encouraged to use discretion and conduct their own research.**

Paying for Law School

[LSAC: Paying for Law School: A Preliminary Guide](#)

[LSAC Fee Waiver](#)

[Scholarships For Law School: Where And How To Get Them](#)

Pipeline Programs

[AccessLex Diversity Pathway Program Directory \(Masterlist of Pre-law Programs\)](#)

[East Los Angeles College Pathway to Law School Transfer Program | AccessLex \(College Freshman/Sophomores\)](#)

[LSAC Plus Program | The Law School Admission Council](#)

[UCLA Law Fellows](#)

[Legal Education Access Pipeline](#)

Resources for First-Gen/Low-Income Students

[Immigrants Rising](#)

[Collective Success Network](#)

[Council on Legal Education Opportunity \(CLEO\)](#)

[SEO Law](#)

[Honors Program in Legal Studies at the Colin Powell School](#)

[UCI Pre-Law Outreach Program](#)

[King Hall Outreach Program \(KHOP\) | School of Law](#)

[MTO Fellows Program](#)

[Sidley Prelaw Scholars Program | Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#)

[Eversheds Sutherland Scholars | Client Tools](#)

[LAWBound™ | LatinoJusticePRLDEF](#)

[About the Program | AT Foundation](#)

[Stanford Law Scholars Institute](#)

[For People of Color, Inc.](#)

[Yale Law School Launchpad Scholars Program](#)

[PracticePro](#)

LSAT Resources

[7 Sage Fee Waiver Program for LSAT Prep](#)

[Khan Academy LSAT Prep](#)

[LawHub LSAT Prep \(As of June 2024, Khan Academy Prep is available Law Hub\)](#)

Resources for 1L

***Disclaimer:** All resources listed herein are provided for informational purposes ONLY. They are not affiliated with the Los Angeles Civil Rights Department and are based solely on personal choice and recommendations. All students are encouraged to use discretion and conduct their own research.

Resources for 1L Law Students

[Cali Law School Materials for Success](#)

[UC San Francisco Resources for 1L](#)

[Loyola Marymount University 1L Survival Guide](#)

Affinity Groups

[Arab American Lawyers Association of Southern California \(AALASC\)](#)

[Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County \(APABA\)](#)

[Asian Pacific American Women Lawyers Alliance \(APAWLA\)](#)

[Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles \(BWL\)](#)

[Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles \(CAALA\)](#)

[Italian American Lawyers Association \(IALA\)](#)

[Iranian American Lawyers Association \(IALA\)](#)

[Japanese American Bar Association \(JABA\)](#)

[John M. Langston Bar Association](#)

[Korean American Bar Association of Southern California](#)

[LGBTQ+ Lawyers Association of Los Angeles](#)

[Muslim Bar Association of Southern California \(MBASC\)](#)

[Mexican American Bar Association \(MABA\)](#)

[Philippine American Bar Association](#)

[Vietnamese American Bar Association of Southern California \(VABASC\)](#)

[Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles \(WLALA\)](#)

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