

A Checklist for Getting into Law School

Consider carefully why you are thinking about going to law school.

Tuition is steep and most law students are left with debt. It's wise to know if the legal profession is right for you before committing yourself. A helpful resource is *Should You Really Be a Lawyer? The Guide to Smart Career Choices Before, During & After Law School*, by Deborah Schneider and Gary Belsky (2005). Chapters three through eight are specifically directed at potential law school applicants.

Read *The Ivey Guide to Law School Admissions*, by Anna Ivey (2005).

Ivey is the former dean of admissions at the University of Chicago Law School. Her book is a quick read and filled with straightforward advice about the admissions process. Visit her webpage at annaivey.com.

Meet with the pre-law advisor if you haven't already done so.

Dr. Terri Mester
Pre-Law Advisor and Adjunct Professor
Office of Undergraduate Studies, Sears 357

To make an appointment call 216.368.2928 or email terri.mester@case.edu. Walk-in hours are posted [here](#) weekly.

Register for the LSAT exam.

To register, visit lsac.org. The current fee for the LSAT is \$180. Be sure to register early if you are requesting special disability accommodations for the exam. When you register, please answer "Yes" to the question asking if you wish to have your results released to your pre-law advisor. This information will help Dr. Mester better advise you in the application process. All personal and identifiable information will remain confidential. Tests are always held in early February, early June, early October or late September, and early December.

Plan to take the LSAT only once and prepare as thoroughly as you can.

You can purchase study materials and copies of prior exams at lsac.org. For information on optional LSAT prep courses, visit kaptest.com/law and testmasters.net. Take a practice test before signing up for a commercial prep class. Also, take at least one practice test under stressful conditions.

Helpful LSAT prep books:

- *Master the LSAT* by Jeff Kolby
- *The PowerScore LSAT Logic Games Bible*
- *The Next 10 Actual, Official LSAT PrepTests*

Register with the Credential Assembly Service

Nearly all law schools require that you register with CAS, which acts as a central repository for the application process. To register, go to lsac.org and look for the [CAS section](#). The CAS fee is \$175, and each [law school report](#) is \$30. You need not identify the specific law schools at the time of registration.

The CAS registration fee includes:

- transcript summarization (as well as authentication and evaluation of academic records for internationally educated JD applicants, if applicable)
- creation of your law school report

- letter of recommendation processing
- electronic application processing for all ABA-approved law schools and some non-ABA-approved schools

Arrange for transcripts from all colleges you have attended to be sent to CAS.

You cannot send transcripts on your own to CAS. They must be sent directly from the issuing schools. Once you have completed your CAS registration, the system will offer you a printout of the necessary transcript request form(s). When you are ready to apply, submit a form with any necessary fees to the Case Western Reserve Registrar or to the Registrar or other official at each of the colleges you have attended.

Transcripts you should have sent include:

- undergraduate and graduate schools
- schools attended for summer or evening courses
- schools attended even though a degree was never received
- schools from which you took college-level courses while in high school even though they were for high school credit
- schools that sponsored your exchange or cooperative program abroad

A transcript must be sent even if the credit was transferred from another school and it appears on your Case Western Reserve transcript. Admissions personnel will be skeptical if any semesters are left out of your application without an explanation.

In August, complete the basic information file for the electronic applications. Remember, your registration fee for CAS includes access to the electronic application forms for all ABA-accredited law schools.

Some law schools offer early decision programs with application deadlines as early as Oct. 15. Even if you are not applying for early decision, you should plan to have all of your applications completed and submitted by Nov. 15, 2016. Schools use rolling admissions, and you will improve your chances for admission if you apply early.

Now or early in the fall semester arrange for two or three letters of recommendation to be sent to CAS.

Choose two recommenders from among faculty members, preferably those who have critiqued your writing. The third recommender is optional and may be another faculty member, employer, coach, or supervisor. CAS will process both general letters directed to all the law schools where you are applying and “targeted” letters directed to one particular law school. Carefully read the information on lsac.org under the CAS section about [letters of recommendation](#).

Supply a copy of your resume, personal statement, and any other materials the recommender may request. The letters can be uploaded online by your recommenders. Keep checking your CAS file to make sure the letters have been received and added to your file.

During the summer, prepare a resume specifically designed for your law school application.

Most schools require a resume as a part of the application. Even if not required, a resume is a productive addition since it provides another opportunity to market yourself to the admissions committee. Stop at the [Career Center](#) (Sears 229) and pick up a copy of the Career Search Guide, which includes directions for resume writing and resume samples. Arrange to have the Career Center staff review your resume. Also submit a copy of your resume to Dr. Mester for review and comment.

During the summer, prepare a two- to three-page personal statement.

For topic ideas, look at Richard Montauk, *How to Get Into the Top Law Schools*, (Prentice Hall, 2006), especially chapters eight through 10 and the application essay samples. Other good resources include:

- *How to Get Into Harvard Law School*, (Willie J. Epps, Jr., 1996)
- *Law School Essays That Made a Difference* (Princeton Review, 2003)
- *Essays That Will Get You Into Law School*, second edition (Daniel Kauffman, 2003)

Some law school applications will require that your essay respond to a specific question, so you may need several essays for different schools. Ask faculty and friends to review your personal statement, and also submit a copy to Dr. Mester for review and comment. This is a very important document. Admissions people want to know what you're like as an individual and why you're interested in their particular school. They also want a sense of your writing skills.

Carefully select the law schools where you will apply.

Helpful online resources include:

- [Official Guide to ABA-approved Law Schools](#)
- [Boston College Online Law Locator](#) (Select your GPA and LSAT scores, and it will present you with a list of eligible law schools.)
- [Internet Legal Research Group](#)
- [U.S. News & World Report – Top Law Schools](#)
- [Brian Leiter's Law School Rankings](#)

You can choose a preliminary list of schools now and then refine it once you have your LSAT score. Be sure to include:

- stretch schools (at least one)
- schools where you are strongly competitive (at least two)
- safety schools (at least two)

Case Western Reserve seniors applying to law school for fall 2015 (the most recent year for which data is available) submitted an average of 12 applications, and they were admitted to an average of six schools. For help in evaluating law schools and programs, talk with Dr. Mester.

If possible, visit the schools where you plan to apply and/or attend a law school forum.

Speak with admissions representatives, and research programs and opportunities at different schools.

For information and online registration for LSAC forums, visit lsac.org/jd/choosing-a-law-school/forums-and-other-events.

Attend presentations by guest speakers sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Studies. Speakers include:

- specialized attorneys
- judges
- prosecutors
- admissions people
- career services personnel
- law professors
- JDs who do not practice law