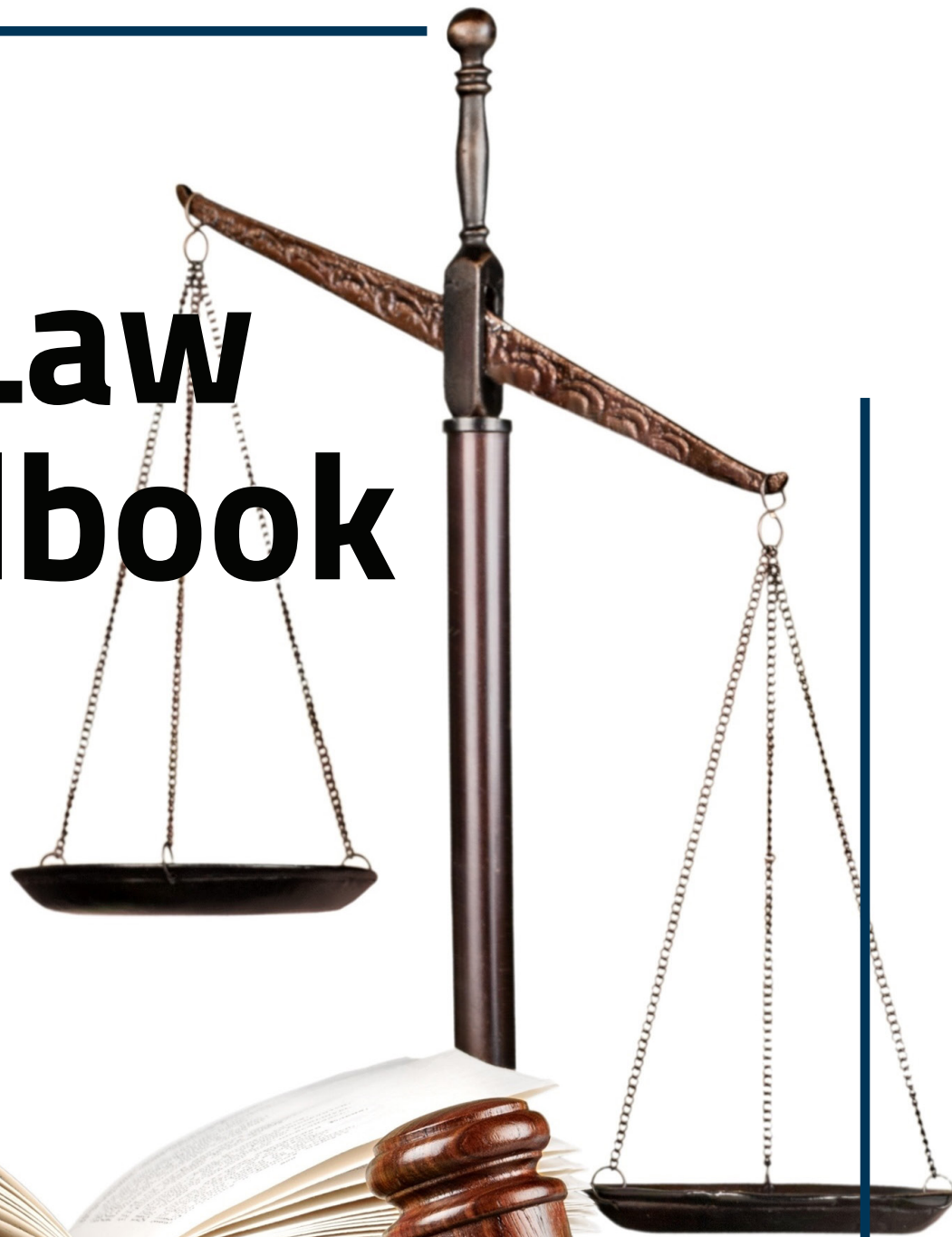


Pre-Law Handbook



Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education
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Deciding on a career in law

A JD, or Juris Doctor, can lead to a variety of law-related fields and can open doors to careers in government, business, non-profits and higher education. Law schools now specialize with concentrations in Intellectual Property, Entertainment Law, Immigration Law, Environmental Law, Health Law, International Law and many others. At the most basic level, “the possibility of effecting social change, setting legal precedent, and defending basic human rights” is indeed attractive to those who want to make an impact on the lives of clients they serve.¹ Though the legal profession holds the promise of high salaries and professional prestige, the ground has shifted in the current legal market and undergraduates need to understand the structural changes that are taking place. Positions for newly minted JD’s have decreased – especially in “big law.” You should pursue a legal career only if it is something you passionately want to do. With the right preparation, your education at Case Western Reserve University will be a strong foundation for your legal education and career.

Exploring your interest

Deciding if a legal career is right for you is an important step in your journey. Your pre-law advisor and the staff in Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education are here to support you as you explore your interest. Here are some suggestions to help you along the way:

- Email your pre-law advisor, Terri Mester (Terri.Mester@case.edu), to be included on the prelaw database, Canvas and Handshake sites. This way, you’ll learn about job opportunities, free LSAT practice tests and upcoming information sessions.
- Attend information sessions and presentations by law school admissions, law professors, judges, prosecutors and specialized practitioners.
- Take assessments like the *Myers Briggs Type Indicator* and *Strong Interest Inventory* through Post Graduate Planning and Experiential Education to determine if your personality, values and interests match those required in the legal profession.
- Intern with a law firm or law-related organization in the summer like Legal Aid or the ACLU to gain exposure to the field.
- Shadow individual lawyers during winter and spring breaks.
- Conduct informational interviews to learn about the legal profession. Talk with lawyers who are family members, friends or CWRU alumni. Inquire about:
 - ✓ What lawyers do in a typical day.
 - ✓ Personal attributes needed to be successful in a legal career.
 - ✓ Satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the field.
 - ✓ Impact of a legal career on personal lives.

¹ For this information we are indebted to Cornell University’s brochure “Legal Careers.”

Preparing for law school

Admissions committees look at a variety of factors and trends in your academic record to predict how well you will perform in law school. There is no “prelaw major,” and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school. Choose classes that challenge your ability to think and reason logically, require you to research subjects thoroughly, write extensively and sharpen your ability to analyze material.

Developing skills

The following disciplines* can help develop the skills you’ll need in law school:

- Social sciences offer insight into human behavior, social processes and institutions. Courses which give you a better understanding of diverse cultures will prepare you for a legal career.
- English and communication courses improve written and oral expression.
- Mathematics and philosophy classes provide background in logic, reasoning and problem-solving.
- Physical sciences require systematic analysis of evidence and inductive reasoning.
- Business courses like management, accounting and economics will provide entrepreneurial skills to help you manage a law practice.

*CWRU also offers law-related courses like Introduction to Logic, Constitutional Law, Environmental Law, Philosophy of Law, Business Law, Law and Economics and the Sociology of Law. Check with individual departments to find out which semesters these courses are available.

Selecting a major

Choose a major that interests you! However, there are specialized areas of law that you may want to prepare for as an undergraduate. For example, if you are considering a career in intellectual property, you may want to major in engineering or science. If you are thinking of environmental law, geology or biology might be appropriate majors for you. Learning languages and taking courses in international studies will help lay the groundwork for a career in international law. Courses in economics, management and accounting are useful for corporate and tax law. Your path is yours to create.

Extra-curricular activities

Admission committees are interested in students with well-rounded backgrounds. They want to see you play a strong leadership role and demonstrate your ability to work well with others. Follow your interests or try something new! If you’re not sure where to begin, a few favorite pre-law activities include: the prelaw society (Phi Alpha Delta), Mock Trial and student government. Also, consider summer jobs, internships and public service.

CWRU School of Law resources

As a CWRU student, you have access to a wealth of pre-law resources at the CWRU School of Law. Those who undertake law-related research projects can access an excellent law library and eager-to-help librarians. Several law professors teach courses in SAGES, history, philosophy and political science too. Both faculty and law students help coach the undergraduate Mock Trial team.

Pre-law students can also participate as jurors in mock trials held as part of the law school course in Trial Tactics. Some undergraduates are employed by the law school in part-time positions as library or office assistants or as actors portraying clients in courses that train law students to interview and counsel. Others take advantage of sitting in on a law school class or watching law students compete in moot court or mock trial programs.

Your pre-law advisor in Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education

If you have questions about your pre-law education, opportunities at CWRU or who want more information about legal careers and the law school admissions process get in touch with Dr. Terri Mester (Terri.Mester@case.edu), your pre-law advisor. She received a BA, MA and PhD from CWRU and is a part-time lecturer in SAGES and adjunct professor in the CWRU School of Law. Her professional writing workshops for lawyers are accredited with the American Bar Association – Dr. Mester is an expert!

Specifically, Dr. Mester can help you with the following areas:

- Navigating the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) site.
- Determining where to apply.
- Critiquing personal statement drafts and resumes.
- Negotiating scholarship offers.
- Visiting local law firms to talk to their lawyers.
- Finding networking opportunities with legal professionals during Community Hour information sessions.

Determining where to apply

There is a lot to consider when picking out a law school. Think about the following and what is most important to you:

- **National/Regional Schools:** Does the school attract students from across the country and world or are most students from the region in which the school is located? Do most of the students want to work in the school's region following graduation or throughout the country?
- **Faculty:** What are the academic and experiential backgrounds of faculty? How accessible are they? What is the faculty-student ratio, the number of full-time vs. adjunct faculty, and the number of minority faculty?
- **Student Body:** What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the quality of the student body? Where did students study as undergraduates and what are their geographic backgrounds? Is there diversity in interests and personal/cultural backgrounds? What is the overall atmosphere—are students friendly or overly competitive? Is there much interaction with fellow students outside the classroom?
- **Special Programs:** What courses are available in specialized areas? What joint degree programs are available? Are there opportunities for practical experience like clinics or internships? Are there specialized institutes, journals or organizations that pique your interest?
- **Career Services:** What resources are available to help you find a job? Is career counseling available? How many employers recruit at the law school and who are they? What percentage of graduates have jobs at graduation? What positions and in which geographic areas are they employed? What percentage of students hold judicial clerkships? What assistance is given to students not interested in working for law firms? What is the bar pass rate for recent graduates?
- **Student Life:** Is housing provided for first-year students? Does the school offer assistance in locating off-campus housing? Is the school located in a safe area? Is the location rural or urban? What is the cost of living? What cultural opportunities are there? Does the school provide recreational facilities like clubs and gyms?
- **Costs:** What are tuition, housing and transportation costs? Is financial aid exclusively based on merit or are need-based scholarships available?
- **Non-Traditional Alternatives:** Are evening divisions or part-time programs available? How long do these alternative programs take? Is there a quarter system where you could enter mid-year? Or is there a summer trial program for borderline applicants before fall entrance?

Checklist for researching law schools

	School #1	School #2
Name of school		
Regional/National		
Faculty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic backgrounds • Faculty/student ratio • Accessibility 		
Student Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of entering class • Geographic backgrounds • Diversity • Interaction beyond the classroom 		
Special Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses available in specialized areas • Joint degree programs • Clinics, internships • Specialized institutes/journals/organizations 		
Career Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of career counseling • % of graduating class with law-related employment • Types of positions • Judicial clerkships • Bar passage rate 		
Student Life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural or urban location • Cost of living • Cultural opportunities • Recreational facilities on campus 		
Cost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, transportation, housing • Financial aid: need or merit based • Expected debt load 		

Applying to law school

How the LSAC website helps you

- Learn about and register for the LSAT.
- Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) to get your transcripts and recommendations processed.
- Complete your applications, submit them online and track their progress throughout the process.
- Sign up for the Candidate Referral Service – a free service that connects you to law schools.
- Apply for fee waivers and accommodated testing on the LSAT.
- Order LSAT study materials.
- Research law schools by using the *Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools*.
- Learn about how to finance your law school education.

Required law school documents

1. Application form

Law school application forms are pretty straightforward, especially if you use LSAC's online application process. You only need to answer common questions like your name, address and undergraduate degree once and you can attach your personal statement, resume and other written information electronically. Most students find the service well worth the cost.

2. 2-3 Letters of recommendation

Most law schools require two letters of recommendation and some require three. You can even submit as many as four letters if you have strong recommenders. Recommendations should include concrete examples of intellectual strength, analytical ability, research skills, maturity, judgment, motivation, leadership and communication skills.

Letters from academics carry the most weight since they reference your success in an academic setting and your potential for law school. If you've been working for several years and are out of academia, supervisors or mentors can also write a letter. But, you should have at least one academic or faculty recommendation. No matter who you ask, make sure that person knows you well!

Approach your potential recommenders well in advance of the application deadline. Ask them: do you know my work well enough to write a positive letter on my behalf to law school? If the answer is yes, provide them with enough information to assist them in writing a detailed and convincing letter.

Consider sharing the following information with your recommender:

- ✓ Resume.
- ✓ Draft of personal statement (if available).
- ✓ Copies of exams or papers written in their class.
- ✓ Questionnaire created by Dr. Mester.
- ✓ Recommendation forms from the LSAC.org website (or stamped envelopes addressed to LSAC).

3. GPA/transcript

Law schools will ask you to submit official transcripts from the Office of the Registrar. Instruct the Registrar to send transcripts to the Credential Assembly Service (or CAS). CAS will send your transcript(s) directly to the law schools where you've applied.

4. LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a standardized test required for admission to all law schools. Scored from 120-180, the test has three main sections: reading comprehension, logical reasoning (also known as arguments) and analytical reasoning (or logic games). The actual test consists of 5 sections (each 35 minutes): one reading comprehension, two logical reasoning, one analytical reasoning and one experimental section. Additionally, there is a writing section which does not factor into your score but is sent to law schools. Many schools now will accept the GRE in lieu of the LSAT and starting July 2019, the LSAT has gone digital.

5. Personal statements

All schools require you to submit at least one written essay. The essay, or "personal statement," is your opportunity to show the school who you are. The statement is usually 500 words or two double-spaced pages. Be sure to attend the personal statement writing workshop held in September!

Tips

The personal statement should be "personal." Highlight aspects of yourself that may not be apparent in other parts of your application. Do not, however, write a theoretical academic essay on a particular topic. Instead, tell a story about yourself!

The personal statement should be easy to read and well written. Write concretely and evoke the senses. Try starting the essay with a revealing anecdote. Use declarative sentences and

active voice. Write several drafts and show them to people you trust to give quality feedback. Law schools will use this letter to evaluate your strengths as a writer.

The personal statement should be original. Although you may want to directly answer the question “why I want to go to law school,” remember that the individuals reading your personal statement have read hundreds of essays which answer this question. Your statement can address how your background and experiences have led you to apply to law school—don’t merely list reasons why you want to be a lawyer. It might be wise to leave out the famous quotes and allusions to Atticus Finch!

6. Resume

Writing a resume requires you to organize your thoughts and express your professional experience in a logical, creative manner. A well-written resume can help your law school application stand out and clearly articulate your relevant experiences when you go to campus to interview. Consult with the experts in Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education to prepare and polish your law school resume.

7. Dean certification letter:

Some law schools require a letter verifying that you are (or were) a student in good academic standing at CWRU. The dean or pre-law advisor must disclose whether you have ever been the subject of formal academic or disciplinary action at CWRU. The Office of Undergraduate Studies has its own form, which you must sign and hand to the pre-law advisor.

LSAT Quick Guide

There are many different resources and strategies to prepare for the LSAT and some resources will work better for some students than others. This list is not complete, but may be useful if you are looking for a variety of test preparation options. **We do not recommend taking the test without some prior preparation.** Take several practice tests in the months before your test date so you know what to expect. Give yourself ample time to prepare mentally and physically for the test date too. Most importantly, believe in yourself!

LSAC recommends practicing on a tablet to simulate the digital experience. Starting with the September 2019 test, the LSAT is fully digital. Students will be provided a tablet at the test-site.

When to take the test

The best time to take the LSAT is when you have the best chance of doing well. You should take it when you have time to focus on preparing for the test and when you are not overwhelmed by other stresses in your life.

The test is offered six times a year: June, July, September, November, January and March. Many students take the test in September of their senior year. This allows for extra time to study during the summer and usually your workload is less intense in early September. However, there are advantages for taking the LSAT in June or July. You'll know your score in the summer and have a better basis to select where to apply. Taking the test in December will allow you to apply the same academic year, but law schools will return a final decision later in the application cycle. If you take the test for the first time in February, you may need to wait until the next academic year to submit your application.

Where to take the test

You can register to take the test at the CWRU Law School. The LSAT is also offered at Kent State University and Akron University. If you don't want to drive 35 miles each way, register early!

LSAT information and resources

Planning ahead is key to your success when taking the LSAT. Dates and deadlines can sneak up quickly. Get ahead and review key dates, deadlines and recommended tips at the resources below:

- LSAT Dates and Deadlines: lsac.org/jd/lsat/test-dates-deadlines
- LSAT FAQ's: lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/lsat-faqs

Online and digital LSAT prep

There are more online and digital LSAT prep resources than ever before. While you may be able to find free prep materials, some have fees. Here are some links and resources to get you started:

- ✓ LSAC: lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/about-digital-lsat
- ✓ 7 Sage: 7sage.com/free-lsat-prep-tools/
- ✓ [KhanAcademy LSAT Prep Course](#)
LSAT Max Prep (online course): testmaxprep.com/lsat/select-course
- ✓ TestMasters: testmasters.net/lsat-prep-courses
- ✓ PowerScore: powerscore.com/lsat/help/
- ✓ [Kaplan LSAT PrepTest Scoring & Explanation Tool](#)

LSAT Prep Books

Nothing beats putting pen to paper and working your way through a traditional LSAT study book. Here are some recommended options for you to consider:

- ✓ LSAC Prep Books and eBooks: lsac.org/jd/lsat/preptools
- ✓ *The PowerScore LSAT Bible Trilogy* (Available at Amazon.com and powerscore.com/lsat/publications/)
- ✓ Kaplan LSAT® Review Books + Digital Resources: kaptest.com/lsat/books
- ✓ 10 Official LSAT PrepTests (Available at Amazon.com)

Private Tutoring

If you would benefit from in-person tutoring and test preparation, consider the following:

- ✓ Prep courses and tutoring options: lsat-center.com/class/ohio-lsat-classes/

Combating test anxiety

Sometimes, even when you're well-prepared for an exam, you might freeze up or experience some anxiety. The LSAT is no exception. Don't hesitate to seek help or guidance from an expert in Academic Resources (AcademicResources@case.edu, 216.368.3478)

- ✓ [CWRU Academic Resources for testing anxiety](#)
- ✓ 7sage.com/five-strategies-for-combating-lsat-anxiety/

Prelaw Timeline

While it's never too early to start considering your law school search, it can be difficult to know when or where to begin. The timeline below will help you stay on track—or even get ahead—in your search.

First and second year

- Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- Begin to form relationships with professors so that they will know your work well enough to serve as recommenders in the future.
- Introduce yourself to your pre-law advisor, Dr. Terri Mester (Terri.Mester@case.edu) in Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education
- Explore your career interests by seeking summer jobs or internships.
- Attend information sessions by Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education.

Third year

- Meet with your pre-law advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular, work experiences and to discuss the application process.
- Set up an account with LSAC (Law School Admissions Council): lsac.org.
- Begin preparing for the LSAT. If you feel ready, register for the June test.
- Secure a summer job or internship, if possible, in a law-related field.
- Research law schools and compile a list of tentative schools.

Fourth year

- Complete all applications by November 15.
- Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). Have transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you have attended sent to the LSDAS after verifying their accuracy.
- Ask potential recommenders if they would be able to write letters on your behalf.
- Take the LSAT in September if you did not in June.
- Begin drafting and revising your personal statement.
- Meet with your pre-law advisor to assess the strength of your application to the schools you are considering. Request a critique of your personal statement draft.
- Take the LSAT in December if you did not take it previously or are retaking the test.
- Complete the FAFSA and any institutional financial aid applications as soon after January 1 as possible.
- Meet with your pre-law advisor in the spring to review options as schools respond to you.
- Take appropriate action on acceptances, wait-list statuses and financial aid packages.

2021 Action Report Summary*

*Data provided by LSAC for CWRU students (seniors and alumni) who were admitted to law schools in the fall of 2021. Numbers in italics represent change from previous application period.

National law school application data

	All Applicants	Seniors Only	Grads (1-3 yrs.)
Total number of applicants	71,112	20,578	50,354
Average highest LSAT score	155.7	156	156.4
Average GPA	3.38	3.54	3.39
Number accepted to 1 or more schools	48,586	16,265	19,542
Average applications per applicant	6.77	7.15	7.32
Average admissions per applicant	1.93	2.31	1.3

Law school application data for CWRU students

	All Applicants	Seniors	Grads (1-3 yrs.)
Total number of applicants	68 in CAS (-6)	15 (-6)	53 (-3)
Average highest LSAT score	161.2 (160.6 last year)	160.9 (157.9 last year)	160.8 (160 last year)
Average GPA	3.49	3.72	3.52
Number accepted to 1 or more schools	35 <i>see explanation below</i>	13	21
Average applications per applicant	8.20	10.21	8.05
Average admissions per applicant	2.98	3.71	3.45

Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Number of CWRU Applicants
Black or African American	16
Asian	24

Explanations and trends

1. The number of CWRU applicants in the CAS system does not reflect the number who withdrew or deferred their applications. In 2021, there were 68 active applications but only 40 who registered at law school.
2. The number of CWRU applicants from 2021 is down from 2020 by 6
3. CWRU applicants' scores are higher than national averages on both GPA and LSAT scores. Seniors score higher on both GPA and the LSAT than alumni.
4. The number of alumni keeps increasing over the number of seniors going directly to law school.
5. CWRU students who apply are being accepted to higher-ranked schools.

Law schools where CWRU students matriculated in 2021*

*Current rankings from *US News and Worsld Report* are in parentheses.

Law School	Applicants	Highest LSAT	GPA	Major(s)
American University (73)	1	165	3.68	Chemical Engineering
Arizona State University (30)	1	167	4.00	Political Science
Ave Maria School of Law	1	157	3.53	Aerospace
Boston College (37)	1	166	3.33	Chemistry
Capital University (147-192)	1	160	2.57	
Case Western Reserve (78)	2	172 & 156	2.85 & 3.67	Philosophy & Arts and Humanities
Cleveland State-Marshall (127)	1	154	3.03	International Studies
University of Denver (78)	1	157	3.94	History
Drexel University (78)	1	171	3.13	Other
Fordham University (37)	1	164	3.78	Other
George Washington (25)	1	155	3.83	History
University of Houston Law Center (58)	1	153	3.63	English
Loyola Marymount (67)	1	163	2.79	Political Science
University of Michigan (10)	1	163	3.95	Biomedical Engineering
Suffolk University (122)	1	159	3.87	Natural Sciences
University of Texas - Austin (17)	1	170	3.79	Biology
William and Mary (30)	1	164	3.83	Political Science
University of Wisconsin - Madison (43)	1	165	3.54	Biomedical Engineering

Resources and Publications

Applying to law school

- top-law-schools.com
- lawschoolnumbers.com
- lawschoolpredictor.com
- bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator.html
- Podcasts
 - [ABA Law Student Podcast](#)
 - [Above the Law: Thinking like a Lawyer](#)
 - [Law School Toolbox](#)
 - [I Am the Law](#)
 - [Thinking LSAT](#)
 - [Women in the Law](#)

Law association resources

- lsac.org
- abanet.org - The American Bar Association's website provides a valuable source of information on a broad range of legal topics.
- abanet.org/careercounsel/profile/profession.html - ABA Attorney By Attorney Online Showcase Profiles. Gain insight into the career possibilities and practice habits of lawyers from a broad range of legal specialties and settings.
- ilrg.com/pre-law.html - The Internet Legal Resources has many links to prelaw websites, including several related to financial aid, law school rankings, and LSAT commercial prep programs.
- nalp.org - NALP – The Association of Legal Professionals. This is the premier source of data and other information about trends in legal employment. Specifically, see their page of questions applicants should ask admissions officials.

Scholarships, grants and financial aid

- FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Fastweb
- FinAid (sponsored by Monster.com)
- lsac.org/choosing-law-school/paying-law-school

Other helpful resources:

- [*LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*](#)
- [*The Book of Law School Lists*](#) (Kaplan, 2018) Online
- *The Ivey Guide to Law School Admissions* (Anna Ivey, 2018 e-book)
- *U.S. News and World Report: Ultimate Guide to Law Schools*

Advice from CWRU Graduates

"Take your undergraduate studies seriously, even if you don't know why. 😊"

"Attend the information sessions sponsored by Post-Graduate Planning and Experiential Education. It is very easy to get caught up in the less important things during undergrad and keep putting things off like applying, studying for the LSAT and going to the sessions."

"Start early. **Talk to actual attorneys**, and be aware of what you're getting into."

"Treat studying for the LSAT like a full-time job if you want to get your best possible score. The LSAT seems extremely important for schools and you would hate for your GPA to be more impressive than your LSAT score in terms of percentiles. The GPA takes way longer to achieve and the LSAT is just one test. Don't let that be your limiting factor between you and your favorite school option."

"Prepare for the LSAT beginning in your junior year and take it in the summer. Also, apply to your schools as early as possible."

"I think it's important to encourage students to explore – this is really the only time in our lives when we'll be able to do so. A lot of students are hesitant taking a year off to explore because it doesn't fit into their 'plans.' I was one of those students. Looking back, it's [taking a year off] been a great experience. Now I'm sure law is right for me."