



PRE-LAW HANDBOOK

A GUIDE FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN LAW SCHOOL

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Introduction

This handbook is for those who are interested in applying to law school. It is useful for seniors who are preparing to take the LSAT and fill out their applications, as well as for all students who are looking ahead toward the time they will be completing their applications.

This handbook does not address the fundamental question of whether law school and a career in law is a good choice for the reader. Although the question is vitally important, this issue is very much an individual matter that does not lend itself to discussion in a document of this kind.

Legal education and a career in law can be challenging and satisfying, but law school and the practice of law are not for everyone. There are multiple books available at the USC library that can help you explore this question, and we would encourage you to talk with lawyers, law students, judges, law school admissions officers, and the pre-law advisor in the Office of Pre-Professional Advising, and anyone else who you think may give you some insight as to whether a career in law is right for you.

Keep in mind the big picture: like any good employer, law schools are looking for smart, hard-working, and interesting people to add to their communities. It is your job to become as strong as possible in each of these dimensions; by doing so, **you make yourself more appealing** to many different law schools.

Good luck!

“You teach yourselves the law, but I train your minds. You come in here with a skull full of mush. You leave thinking like a lawyer.”

Professor Charles W. Kingsfield, Jr.
The Paper Chase, 20th Century Fox

Academic Preparation

The two most important factors law schools consider in deciding whom to admit are the undergraduate **grade point average (GPA)** and the **score on the LSAT**. (The LSAT is a four-hour timed exam, usually taken at the end of the junior year or the beginning of the senior year.) There is no better preparation for law school than taking tough undergraduate courses and doing well in them.

Creating the undergraduate academic record starts in the first semester of the first year. It is important to get settled academically and make your academic work your highest priority from the very beginning.

Select a **major** (or majors) in an area that interest you, and do well. There is no “preferred” major that law schools are looking for, they welcome all academically challenging majors. Successful law students have undergraduate degrees in all fields, everything from Political Science, Engineering, Statistics, Psychology, Chemistry, and Art History. A solid GPA – particularly within your major – is expected, but a willingness to go beyond requirements

demonstrates an intellectual curiosity that would be advantageous in the study of law. The best thing you can do is to study something that interests you.

Law schools are interested in your ability to do rigorous analytical research, to write well, and to persuade. Take courses that will develop these skills. The American Bar Association offers an overview of the skills and values important to preparing for a legal education and career in law in its Preparing for Law School statement at <http://www.abanet.org/legaed/prelaw/prep.html>

It is highly recommended that you review this statement and assess your skills and values to determine if they are consistent with a career in law.

There are three basic areas in which pre-law students need to develop proficiency:

1. Effectiveness in the comprehension and use of oral and written language.
2. In-depth understanding of human institutions and values.
3. Analytical and critical thinking.

Language:

Language is the most important working tool used by the lawyer. Whether the task is effectively negotiating a contract, examining a witness in court, preparing an appellate brief or just grasping the exact meanings of legal provisions, the lawyer must understand the precise meanings of words. To facilitate the development of language skills, students should pursue course that will give them adequate practice in:

1. Expression: vocabulary, usage, grammar, organized presentation, structure of language, and clarity of statement in both writing and speaking.
2. Comprehension: concentration and effective recollection in reading and listening skills.

Both expression and comprehension require sensitivity to the fluidity of language – the various meanings of words in different times and contexts, shades of meaning, interpretive problems and the hazards in use of ambiguous terms. Also, skilled expression, especially for the lawyer, requires knowledge of the deceptiveness of language – emotionally charged words, catch phrases, hidden meanings, and empty generalizations.

Human Institutions and Values

A good lawyer must have insight into information about the institutions and values which concern the public at large, since lawyers are a force in shaping such institutions. Such insight comes from intensive study in selected areas, rather than from attempts to skim all the large areas. Your major, minor, and concentrations will have an impact on your development in this area.

Creative Power in Thinking

Perhaps the lawyer's most valuable asset is the power to think clearly, carefully, and independently. The role of the lawyer involves constant problem-solving and sound judgment. Creative power thinking has, as its prerequisite, the acquisition of skills in research, use of facts, inductive, deductive and analytic reasoning, critical analysis, and the systematic formulation of principles and concepts.

Classes that stress critical thinking can include: English, history, philosophy, economics, sociology, geography, and political science; all classes in the natural sciences, lab courses in psychology, classes involving research methods in the social sciences; and all courses in computer science and mathematics. You should take challenging courses in all disciplines to strengthen your skills. Courses in philosophy that stress logic and analytic reasoning skills can also be beneficial to the development of critical thinking skills and can help you prepare for the LSAT.

Law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject, but they neither cover the material in the same depth nor embody the intensity and rigor of law school. Therefore, they are not especially accurate indicators of your ability to succeed in the study of law or whether you will enjoy it. Law schools (and admission officers) will not necessarily determine that you will be a successful law school student based on your completion of law-related courses. It is fine to take some of these as an opportunity to test your level of interest, but save law study for law school. Use your undergraduate years as a time to acquire a broad education.

Minimize your use of each of the following: pass-fail grading, course withdrawals, and incompletes. These marks on your transcript will give the admissions committee (and potential legal employers) pause.

In general, **lecture courses** provide a good foundation for further instruction, while **seminars** allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to better interact with faculty. At a school the size of USC, it is very important that you begin early in your college career to get to know faculty whom you might later ask for recommendations; make yourself stand out as an individual by attending office hours, asking questions in class, and conducting research with faculty.

Learning a **foreign language** and **study abroad** are wonderful opportunities to pursue during your undergraduate years. The law, like everything else, deals increasingly with global concerns, and the ability to communicate in a language other than English can be very valuable. Studying abroad is often a student's most memorable college experience. Do not choose to study abroad, however, if your motivation is solely to enhance your chances of admission to law school – it does not make that much difference to law schools.

If you are entering your senior year and your **GPA has been affected by a poor start** at USC, consider waiting to apply to law school until after you have graduated. Remember that law school is not going anywhere, and your chances for admission could potentially be much greater with an additional strong year of academic work on record.

If you want to convince admissions officers that you are indeed intellectually and emotionally ready for the rigors of law school, waiting to apply until after you graduate gives you additional “evidence” to support that argument – they will have more classes to view. It also gives you a chance to raise your overall GPA (because the senior year grades will be factored in), and you will have the opportunity to get to know more professors who might write you letters of recommendation. At the very least, if you want to apply during your senior year, make sure you send in fall grades to LSAC once grades are submitted in December.

LSAC, LSAT and CAS

The Law School Admissions Council (**LSAC**) is a corporation that coordinates and facilitates law school admissions processes. Everything you need to know about the law school admissions process is available on the LSAC web site at www.lsac.org. LSAC oversees the Law School Admission Test (**LSAT**) and the Credential Assembly Service (**CAS**).

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST

The **LSAT** is required by ABA-approved law schools for admission and is given four times a year (in February, June, late September or early October, and December). The LSAT score is very important to law school admissions officers. Unlike the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), the LSAT assumes no prior knowledge of any particular area. In other words, it does not test any subject matter that you presumably have studied. Instead, the LSAT tests **cognitive, reading and analytical skills**, abilities that an attorney must use on a daily basis. The **LSAT** score and your **GPA** are absolutely the two most important factors in law school admissions decisions – and the LSAT score is generally seen as the more important of the two.

The test consists of five 35-minute timed multiple choice sections: one on reading comprehension, one on analytical thinking, two on logical reasoning, and a fifth “experimental” section, which is not graded. However, you **DO NOT KNOW** which section is the “experimental section” so you must do well on all sections. There is also a section that seeks a writing sample. This section of the test is not graded, but a copy of your writing sample is provided to every law school to which you apply.

Careful preparation for the test is essential. **Plan to take it only one time, and do well on it.** How you prepare (by taking a test prep class or working on your own) is up to you, but do not take the test without a lot of practice. There is no substitute for taking previously used, real LSAT exams (available from **LSAC** or test prep providers) under realistic, timed conditions. Do **not** register for and take the actual LSAT for “practice,” since all of your scores within a five

year period are reported to the law schools. Some law schools average multiple scores, though a majority of law schools are now taking the highest score. All schools, however, see all scores. Most schools post information about their policy on multiple scores on their websites.

June after the junior year is probably the best time to take the test for those planning to apply to law school as seniors. You will have your score before the summer is over, so during the summer or very early in the fall you can develop a realistic list of schools to which you want to apply. A good **second choice** is to take the LSAT in the **fall of your senior year** (late September/early October), which still allows applications to be filed well before the deadlines. Those planning to work or pursue other interests between college and law school can put the test off a bit. LSAC keeps scores for five years.

Scoring

Your score on the LSAT is built entirely on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for wrong answers so feel free to guess. NEVER leave answers unmarked. You have nothing to lose by guessing on an answer.

The number of questions you answer correctly is your **raw score**. Your raw score is then scaled against other test-takers' raw scores and finally calculated into LSAT score ranging from **120 to 180**. This score will also be assigned a percentile ranking based on the scores earned over the immediate three preceding years.

The Score Scale

This scale will extend from 120 to 180, with a **mean of 150**. It will have 61 distinct score points in it. This should provide a reliable measurement across a broad range of score scale, meaning that a test taker's relative position in the applicant pool would be consistent if tested many times. It should also allow an evident distinction between more-able and less-able test takers.

LSAT STUDY PLAN

(Around 18 weeks before the test date: roughly 4½ months)

GOALS:

- Take at least 10 TIMED practice tests
- Study weaker sections each week (keep log)
- Practice strong sections each week (keep log)
- Keep log of practice test results and use to guide studying

Practice Test Table: Practice Test #	Target Dates (Try for every Two Weeks)	Actual Date	Score

Assignments Between Tests:

1. Analyze tests results using table
2. Write down two weakness and four strengths
3. Practice and log practice time

Time spent practicing (at least 2 hours per area)	Totals
Weak Areas	>=2hours
Strong Areas	>=2hours

CREDENTIAL ASSEMBLY SERVICE

To **centralize and standardize** objective application information – **GPA and LSAT scores** – ABA-approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). The service organizes and analyzes applicant information in a way that allows law schools to compare academic records from undergraduate schools that use different grading systems.

CAS prepares a report of your academic record for the law schools to which you apply. Most schools require that you register with CAS, and you must pay a registration fee that is separate from LSAT fees. Law schools contact CAS directly for the report; you will indicate to CAS how many reports you would like to pay for and to which law schools you would like reports sent. A CAS subscription lasts for five years; if you take the LSAT during this time, your CAS period will be extended for five years from the LSAT registration date.

Your **CAS report** includes copies of transcripts of your undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. If you have taken any college-level courses for credit at another institution (e.g. summer school or college classes taken for credit while in high school), you must arrange to have that institution's transcripts sent to CAS. **Follow all instructions on the LSAC website. It is your responsibility to ask each college or university you have attended to furnish transcripts to CAS.** If you have studied abroad, your credits should eventually be placed on your USC transcript. We suggest, however, that you ask personnel in the Study Abroad office to send an authenticated copy of your transcript directly to CAS. CAS will not evaluate that transcript or include those grades in the report it prepares; it should, however, include a copy of that transcript in the report it sends to law schools, which will give those schools a more complete picture of your academic record.

CAS will compute a GPA for you that includes the results of *all* academic work reported on a U.S. or Canadian transcript. Trends in your grades – both positive and negative – will be evident. **Check the CAS report carefully** when you receive your subscription confirmation letter. *These reports are prepared by human beings, so mistakes do occur. Contact LSAC and let them know about any errors, even those in your favor.*

You may wish to check the “**Candidate Referral Service**” box in the registration section of the CAS application. This will result in certain biographical, academic, and LSAT data being forward to law schools that request it. Some schools may then invite you to apply, perhaps even waiving the application fee. Similarly, **please check “yes” in the box seeking authorization of release of data to the undergraduate pre-law advisor.** Individual LSAT data are not released to anyone, but having it in an aggregated form helps our pre-law advising program considerably.

At the end of the fall semester, ask the Office of the University Registrar to send CAS your **fall grades** if you want to have them considered. CAS will add the new material and generate updated reports for the law schools to which you have applied (at no additional cost to you). If you are still on a waitlist at the end of the spring semester, have the Registrar's Office send your transcript again.

If you are unable to pay the fees for the LSAT and/or CAS, complete the **fee waiver application** that is available from LSAC on their website.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATIONS

When you complete the actual law school applications, do them carefully. **PROOFREAD EVERYTHING CAREFULLY.** Follow all instructions to the letter. Leave nothing blank – if a question is inapplicable to you, put “not applicable” in the space provided. Do not sign the application until you are sure you understand all aspects of the application. While filling out the application is not intellectually taxing, you need to **exercise care** when doing so. Admissions officers will inevitably be disillusioned by an application that is illegible or contains spelling or grammatical errors, typographical errors, cross-outs, type-overs, or completion errors.

Look at the questions that seek a written statement, then tailor your answer to the question – do not assume that one statement will suffice for every school to which you are applying. Do not send a personal statement to Law School “X” by mistake that explains why Law School “Y” is a great fit for you.

Disclose any past “troubles” including **academic problems, discipline problems, arrests, convictions** – anything the application seeks. These sorts of incidents will not automatically bar your admission to law school. The law schools are looking carefully to see whether you have taken responsibility for your actions and how you have responded to negative consequences. If you do not disclose them on the applications, they may catch up with you somewhere else in the application process, triggering a misconduct inquiry. When you are ready to graduate from law school, the bar of the state in which you wish to practice will conduct a very detailed review of your past, and something may pop up then, causing you to have to explain not only the event, but also the failure to disclose it during the application process. Please talk with a pre-law advisor if you have any concerns at all about these questions on the applications.

It is a good idea to include a **resume** (one page preferred but not required) that outlines your academic accomplishments, activities, work experience and other competencies in one place. Do not, however, fail to answer question on the application itself by noting “see enclosed resume” – answer the questions AND include the resume.

Apply early! Most law schools have rolling admissions, so it is to your advantage to have your application read as early as possible. Some law schools offer early decision and early notification. Try to have all of your **applications completed as early in the fall as possible. If you are taking the fall LSAT, aim for early November.** You want your file to be considered

while most of the seats in the class are still available. This also maximizes your chances for merit-based scholarships.

Remember, a application shows that you are **ready to excel** in a particular law school's program. It is also your first, and likely, only chance at making a good first impression. In part, your qualifications as an applicant are judged by how carefully and thoughtfully you put together the whole of application, so it is **highly recommended you put considerable time and effort** into every step of the process. While it might sound simple, completed, well written, applications are of vital importance.

Further, if a school invites you to add anything that you feel is relevant to your application be sure to respond to such requests.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

In many ways, the personal statement is the only part of the application that is completely within your control. This is your opportunity to make the admissions committee remember you and to distinguish yourself from other applicants. Imagine that it substitutes for a ten minute interview – what would you want to tell your interviewer about you?

Schools will be seeking information about your **background, personal qualities and leadership skills, and motivation**, to learn what is unique about you and what distinguishes you from other candidates with similar **GPA's and LSAT** scores. Your statement should be serious, honest, and sincere, and the tone should be **confident and positive**.

Law schools will be looking for evidence that you can write a coherent statement. Follow general **guidelines for writing an essay**: there should be introductory and concluding paragraphs; each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence; and there should be a clear line of development through the statement. Ideas should be supported with concrete examples.

The personal statement is important both in its **substance and its presentation**. It warrants numerous drafts. Show it to people you trust and ask for their comments. Take it to the Writing Center and ask for a critique. Listen carefully to all of the comments you receive, but accept only the advice that makes sense to you.

The critical elements in writing the personal statement are what you say, as well as how you say it. It is assumed that, as a college senior or graduate, you are capable of writing proficiently. Failure to do so will do irreparable damage to your chances for admission.

A good essay is rarely enough to compensate for an otherwise weak application, but **it is the factor** that helps to positively sway the committee on "middle-of-the-road" cases. The personal statement is the only opportunity for the admissions committee to get to know you as an individual. It is the vehicle that allows you to tell the law school anything about you that you want them to know. You should use this opportunity to your fullest advantage. Make yourself come alive; let the committee know something that it could not learn from reading the other parts

of the application. The personal statement should include at least a few sentences explaining why you want to go to law school. Because very few law schools grant personal interviews in the application process, the personal statement is an opportunity to introduce yourself in writing to the selection committee.

For most law schools, you may write on any topic you wish, as long as it is “personal,” expressing information about yourself. This is not the forum to express your opinion on the ramifications of a Supreme Court decision. Nor is it the proper place to apologize for weak spots in your application. **NEVER** be apologetic in your essay. If you do have a weak spot or two in your application for a valid reason, explanations should be addressed in your letters of recommendation or in a supplementary statement from you. Through your essay, you should put your best foot forward to impress the committee in a positive way, not to elicit routine sympathy that will not help your chances for admission.

You may want to write on some detail of a college activity that indicates your motivation and maturity as well as your abilities. Employment experiences, special family situations, and reflections on your semester abroad are all possible topics. **Do not**, however, write essays on “Why I Have Always Wanted to be a Lawyer” or “Why I Believe Your Institution is the Best Law School.” The best way to impress the committee is to write on something in a fresh light. Be as **specific and detailed** as you can. Avoid generalizations and clichés. Communicating an original idea in a clear, logical, and coherent manner will more than suffice. You want to show the admissions committee why you are unique and what you would bring to their class if admitted.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Like the personal statement, strong letters of recommendation can make a positive difference in situations where your GPA and LSAT score put you in the middle of the group applying to a given law school. See a **minimum of two letters from faculty members who know you well**. If you believe you can get a strong letter from a third faculty member, someone else on campus, an employer, or an internship supervisor, request it as well. Be aware, though, letters from people outside academia may carry less weight, since they may be unable to address the topic of greatest interest to admissions committees: your academic potential.

The best and most persuasive recommendation letters are written by faculty members who can comment in some detail on your **intellectual capacity**, your **writing skills**, your **motivation**, and your **overall academic experience** here. You will enhance your chances of getting such a detailed letter by letting faculty members get to know you. Participate in class. Use office hours to discuss material you do not fully understand. Take a second class with a professor from whom you learned a great deal. **A strong and detailed letter from a junior faculty member who knows you and your abilities well is better than a terse letter from a senior faculty member or employer who does not know you well and cannot comment in detail on your skills and attributes.**

Ask for a letter of recommendation **in person**, if possible. Ask if s/he can write you a letter of recommendation that will be helpful to your application. If there is any hesitation, thank the person and ask someone else. If necessary, ask your recommender if you can set up some time to talk about your experiences and goals. **Ask for these letters early to give your writers plenty of time.** Give the letter writers the **tools** they need to write a thorough, personal letter, including a copy of your resume, an unofficial transcript, a copy of significant written work you have done, and anything else that might help him/her supply details in the letter.

Finally, remember to send your letter writers a **thank you note** after the letter as been submitted. People who take the time to write letters for you are interested in your plans; you should let them know where you are accepted and which law school you will attend. This is courteous and will help you stay in touch with them should you need another letter or reference when applying for employment while in law school.

Admissions committees will be seeking information not provided elsewhere in the applications. Recommendation letters should include concrete examples of **intellectual strength, judgment, motivation, and leadership**, along with an appraisal of **communication skills** and a **comparison to peers**.

HOW TO ASK FOR A LETTER OR RECOMMENDATION

- **Make an appointment** to meet with letter writers well in advance of the application deadline. **Ask them “Do you feel you know my work well enough to write a positive letter on behalf of my application to law school?”** If you sense even a little hesitation, move on. Lukewarm letters are not very helpful for law school candidates.
- Once the recommender has agreed to write a letter for you, provide information about your background to assist him/her in writing a detailed letter, including:
- a cover sheet describing your academic relationship, including courses you have taken, research you have conducted, your experiences as a TA, etc.
- a copy of your transcript
- a draft of your personal statement (if available)
- a resume
- copies of exams or papers written in his/her class
- information about submitting the LOR directly to LSAC electronically (via email) or recommendation forms from CAS and a stamped envelope addressed to LSAC, so that the letters will be sent directly to CAS
- preferred date for recommendation to be completed
- **Waive your right of access** since you may find writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters

You can check your CAS account online to determine when the letters have been received and processed. At least 2-3 weeks before a deadline, speak with those writers who have not sent letters yet to remind them politely of the upcoming deadline

Law School Visits

When you visit a law school, remember that you **are looking for a place to continue your education AND a strong professional placement service** - - law school is a professional program, and you should expect your law school to assist you in finding a suitable position in the legal field upon your graduation.

To assess what the educational experience at a given law school will be like, try to do the following:

- Sit in on some **classes**. Stop in the lounge and **talk to students and faculty**. The quality of your fellow students is very important. Try to discern whether you will be challenged and stretched intellectually and also whether you will feel comfortable there.
- Look at the **library and computing facilities** – these will become very familiar to you, and are of utmost importance. Law students spend countless hours in the library. Are the facilities large enough for the student body? Are they comfortable and well lit? Are they open at the times you will want to use them?
- Talk to the administrators you will rely on - - e.g., the **dean of students** and the **financial aid administrator**. Do they seem knowledgeable and supportive?
- Ask about **clinics, journals, and moot court** - - find out how students are chosen, and what percentage of students wishing to participate are able to do so.
- Think about where you will live. Ask about **housing**, and be sure you will be able to live safely and within reasonable commuting distance if you are not in campus housing.

To get a sense of the law school's professional placement record, visit the **Career Office**. Ask about the following:

- What sorts of positions do graduates take? What starting salaries do they earn? Where do they locate?
- Look at interview sign-up sheets - - see which employers come to visit the law school to interview students.
- How do those in the top 10% of the class do, and how do those in the middle and lower thirds do in terms of finding jobs? Not everyone can finish in the top 10%, and you will want to know what your prospects are of if you do not do as well as you hope.

Financing Law School

Law school is an expensive investment. It would not be difficult to incur a costs of \$200,000 or more for a three-year legal education – tuition alone is above \$55,000 per year at some private institutions. Books, housing, food, and personal expenses add up.

Eighty percent of law students rely on loans as the primary source of financing for their education. Think carefully about how much debt you are willing to assume and what salary you will need to earn to pay back your loans.

The law schools to which you apply should be your primary source of information about the availability of funds. In general, you will be considered independent of your family for the purposes of determining **federal aid eligibility**. Law schools, however, will often require parental income information in order to determine eligibility for institutional scholarships and loans.

Start the financial aid application process in December. Apply for a Personal Identification Number from the U.S. Department of Education (www.pin.ed.gov), a prerequisite to filing for federal financial aid. Once you have that (it may take several weeks), file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) as soon as you can after January 1. Copies are available in the Office of Financial Aid, and online. If you plan to apply for aid from the law schools themselves, submit those applications as early as possible to be considered for scholarship money. Each school has its own forms and deadlines - - be sure you submit the right materials. If you are unsatisfied with the package offered you, ask whether there is an appeal process, and if so, use it. Some schools offer Loan Repayment Assistance Programs (LRAPS) to their graduates working in low-paying and/or public interest jobs. Look for this information on school web sites.

If you have current indebtedness, get some **financial counseling**. Save as much money as you can before you begin law school. Pay off any outstanding consumer debt. **Maintaining a good credit record is critical to eligibility for federal loans.**

More information on financing a legal education can be found in a brochure published by the Law School Admission Council and available on their website.

Timeline

Freshman and Sophomore Years

- Contact Pre-Professional Advising at 777-5581 to be placed on our listserv.
- Start becoming involved in campus activities, **but prudently so**. Do not become overwhelmed by outside commitments. You cannot allow your GPA to suffer.
- Start exploring community service opportunities. A good place to start is with the Leadership and Service Center at 777-7130.
- **Get to know** your professors, build relationships with them.
- **Get good grades!**

Junior Year

- Begin preparing for the LSAT. **Familiarize yourself** with the test format and question types. Practice answering questions from old LSATs, use LSAT prep books, or participate in a commercial test preparation course. **Commit yourself** to a method of preparation and take two or three timed, full-length tests.

- Make preliminary investigations of law schools. Review Official Guide to US Law Schools (available to borrow from Pre-Professional Advising, or purchase through Law Services), to gather general information. Consider a school's **size, location, costs, programs, reputation, and admissions statistics** in your deliberations.
- Begin visiting law schools that interest you most (**make sure** you make an appointment).
- **DO NOT** neglect your GPA. If you plan to go directly to law school, your junior year may be the last work law schools see when determining your admission. Make it a strong ending.
- Consider which faculty members you will ask to provide letters of recommendations. Contact them **now** to make sure they will not be on sabbatical or otherwise unavailable.
- In mid-spring, pick up the LSAT and LSDAS Registration and Information Book which is available in Pre-Professional Advising.
- Register for the June LSAT, if you choose to take it then (**and, if you are applying directly out of college, this is the best time to take it**), and subscribe to LSDAS.

Summer After Junior Year

- **If you have not already done so**, take the time to read and understand the material covered in the LSAT and LSDAS Registration and Information Book. This contains a thorough explanation of the law school admissions process.
- Complete your **preparation** for the LSAT.
- Review your **law school possibilities**. Consider schools in light of your GPA and LSAT score. Make a **tentative list** of those to which you would really like to go, a majority of reasonable chances, and a few safe choices among your initial list of schools.

Senior Year

- Request catalogs, applications, and financial aid/scholarship information from law schools.
- When you receive the information, read through catalogs and applications and **make decisions** about how many and to which schools you plan to apply.
- **Keep a record** of all materials and correspondence you send and receive for each school. Photocopy all important documents **before** mailing.
- **Approach faculty** about writing letters of recommendation.
- If you have not already done so, **take the LSAT in October!**
- Work on the drafts of your personal statement. Revise it yourself and have others review it for grammar, syntax, content, and style. **Keep revising it until it is right.**
- Have transcripts from **all** institutions of higher education at which you have ever registered sent to LSDAS.
- Prepare your final applications and send them in early!
- Allow two weeks, then **check to see that your application files are complete** at each school.
- Once responses begin coming in, assess your options and finances.

- By **April 1**, accept what you consider to be your best offer and send in a deposit to reserve your seat in the class.
- **Notify** other schools to which you were accepted that you are declining their offers.
- **Inform** your recommenders and the Office of Pre-Professional Advising of your results and decision.
- **Graduate!** Good luck in law school!

Resources

The following is a list of resources that may be helpful to you. Many are available in the Resource Room in the Office of Pre-Professional Advising.

Choosing a Career in Law, Dina Rakoff

Essays that Worked for Law School, Boykin Curry

Fifteen Law Schools, Cynthia Cooper

Financial Aid for Law School: A Preliminary Guide, Published by the LSDAS

Full Disclosure: Do You Really Want to Be a Lawyer?, Compiled by Susan Bell

Getting Into Law School, Martinson and Waldherr

How to Get Into Harvard Law School, Willie J. Epps

LSAT All-In-One by Kaplan, Published by Kaplan Company

LSAT: The Official Triple Prep Volumes 1, 2, 3, Published by the Law School Admissions Council

One L, Scott Turow

So You Want to be a Lawyer: A Practical Guide, Published by LSDAS

The Paper Chase, John J. Osborn, Jr.

The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools, Available from LSDAS

Thinking About Law School: A Minority Guide, Published by LSDAS

What Can You Do With a Law Degree?, Debra Arron

www.sc.edu/oppa Office of Pre-Professional Advising

www.lsac.org