

OTHER APPLICATION COMPONENTS

GPA

Aside from the LSAT, GPA is the most reliable predictor of your performance in law school and the most important factor in an admissions decision. LSAC has its own set of rules regarding GPA calculation, rules which an applicant can find on the LSAC website.

Transcript

Admissions officers use your transcript to interpret your GPA by gauging the difficulty and heaviness of your course load each semester. Transcripts can be real life-savers if you have a comparatively low GPA but took very challenging courses, or if you've had good grades except for one semester when you had mono. Conversely, transcripts can hurt your application if you took only easy classes.

Be prepared to explain the cause of any irregularity in your transcript (such as a bad semester), and consider submitting an addendum with this information.

Personal Essays

Beyond considering your GPA and LSAT score, Admissions Offices try to put together a diverse and dynamic class of individuals with different personality types, outlooks and experiences. Personal essays allow you to convey a picture of yourself as a person, so focus on yourself, not on how much you know about law.

Law School Essays that Made a Difference, by Princeton Review offers a fine collection of essays from successful applicants to America's top law schools. The book also provides the LSAT scores and GPAs of the applicants, so readers can tell how much each essay may have strengthened the application.

Resume

Your resume allows law schools to see your employment background, education, honors, and special skills or interests. Look over the Career Services Resume Guide for direction and examples.

Recommendations

The purpose of law school recommendation letters, like the personal essays and the resume, is to provide admissions officers with an idea of who you are beyond your grades and scores, this time from someone else's viewpoint. Choose recommenders who know you well, think highly of you, and can speak to your strengths and abilities.

As a Hillsdale student, you have the advantage of professors who interact with you personally and can testify to your academic excellence and other attractive qualities. Do everything in your power to assist your recommenders. Offer to provide a transcript, resume, and any other potentially helpful documents. Even offer to discuss the letter itself with your recommender. Also remember to follow up with a handwritten thank-you note.

Law School

A HILLSDALE COLLEGE CAREER SERVICES GUIDE

As a Hillsdale College student, you have advantages that can make you an outstanding law school applicant. Your education can be a source of strength for your LSAT score, recommendations, and personal statement. The skills you have developed through close, critical reading of texts have equipped you to excel on the LSAT. This booklet will help you utilize those potential Hillsdale advantages and will also point you towards other reliable sources to enable you to succeed.

IS LAW SCHOOL RIGHT FOR ME?

Steps when Considering Law School

1. Explore the Possibilities. Shocking though it may be, the show "Law and Order" is not a strictly factual depiction of the daily life of a lawyer. Familiarize yourself with the actual opportunities available in the legal field, including positions in civil, criminal and corporate law. Speak to lawyers about their daily tasks and responsibilities, and consider what positions appeal to you.

2. Shadow/Intern in a Legal Environment. Whether it be at a law firm, a court, or a corporation, working with and for lawyers provides invaluable networking opportunities and exposure to the legal field.

3. Connect with Mentors. General advice can be very helpful when considering law school, but your particular situation will be unique. For questions such as whether you take a gap year before law school and how to weigh law school options, advice that is informed and personalized will prove invaluable. Meet with our staff in Career Services, reach out to personal and family acquaintances, and connect with alumni and friends of the college.

4. Realistically Consider Your Chances. Your law school options will be determined in large part by your LSAT score and GPA. Prioritize LSAT preparation and maintaining/improving your GPA in your remaining semesters.

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Be Professional. Whether you're dealing with the LSAC or directly with Law Schools, it's essential that you maintain professionalism every step of the way. Impressions last.

2. Be Timely. The application process always takes longer than you think, so complete elements as soon as possible. Allow for processing time by submitting documents to the LSAC several weeks before the schools require them.

3. Follow directions. Be sure to submit forms exactly as directed by the LSAC or a law school, even if it seems arbitrary. Do not hesitate to contact the LSAC or a law school if you have questions about instructions.

4. Be thorough. The LSAC provides application checklists, but it does not send reminders of forgotten portions of an application. Check your application status often.

What is the LSAC?

The Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) makes and administers the LSAT, and it also runs the LDAS, the Law School Data Assembly Service, the electronic application service used by nearly every American law school.

THE LSAT

Your score on this four hour test will count as much, if not more, than any other component of your application. The single most reliable way of getting into the school of your choice is to knock the LSAT out of the park.

The Sections

35 minutes each, these sections can be arranged in any order, with the exception of the writing section, which always comes last.

- 1. Logical reasoning:** 2 multiple-choice sections.
- 2. Reading comprehension:** 1 multiple-choice section.
- 3. Analytical reasoning:** 1 multiple-choice section of the famous “logic games.”
- 4. Writing.** 1 section testing your ability to clearly and concisely express a point on paper.
- 5. Experimental Section:** This multiple-choice section will be an additional logical reasoning, reading comprehension, or analytical reasoning section. It does not count toward your score, but you will not know until you receive your scores which section was the experimental one. Don't try to guess; just do your best work on all the sections.

LEARNING THE LSAT

1. Start Early. As with the entire law school application process, the essential *sine qua non* of LSAT preparation is time. If you're reading this a few weeks before you take the test, don't despair: even a few weeks is enough to learn the LSAT pretty well. For optimal performance, preparing months in advance is ideal. Allow yourself time to practice not only individual sections, but full-length tests as well.

2. Learn the Test. The LSAT is challenging—that's the point—but it's not impossible. *The LSAT tests how you think, not what you know about law.* If you have never opened a law textbook in your life, you are at absolutely no disadvantage. Most importantly, the test is *learnable*. With enough time and the right practice methods, you can learn to think the way the LSAT wants you to think. Invest in preparation materials and devote substantial time to set yourself up for success.

3. Practice. Taking practice tests will help you build stamina for four-hours of intensive analytical thinking that the LSAT requires. Even after you've become satisfied with your testing technique, keep yourself fresh until the day of the test by working a section or two once or twice a week and doing a full-length test on the weekends. Your goal is to shape your thought processes around the LSAT, and the best way to do this is to practice for hundreds of hours.

Recommended LSAT Prep Books

***The Ivey Guide to Law School Admissions*, by Anna Ivey.** This book includes excellent advice on essays, resumes, and interviews from Anna Ivey, former Dean of Admissions at Chicago Law.

***Cracking the LSAT*, by Princeton Review.** This fairly standard LSAT prep book proves especially helpful with logical analysis questions (half your score) and logic games. The reading comprehension section is weakest, but this section is the hardest to teach. The full-length prep tests in this book are a bit harder than actual LSATs, but over preparing doesn't hurt.

The Powerscore series. Powerscore makes comprehensive books on each section of the LSAT that prove invaluable for working on particular problem sections.

***10 Actual, Official LSAT PrepTests*, published by LSAC.** These three books, as well as *The Official LSAT SuperPrep*, are collections of previously-administered LSAT's that LSAC publishes. They are available at lsac.org, where you can also buy the most recently administered LSAT's individually. After finishing whatever initial prep books you use—you really should rely just on actual LSATs. It's extremely difficult for test-prep companies to simulate the test perfectly, and you want to learn to think *exactly* like the test. The LSAT is paper-based, so you should never take a computerized version of the test which doesn't compensate for the time required to bubble in answers. Buy enough practice tests to take many full-length tests and break some of them apart to study particular kinds of sections.