

Pre-Law Students and Choosing a Major

What is a good major if I plan to go to law school? This is one of the most common questions asked by pre-law students. Law schools prefer no specific major. The very best major is one that is interesting to you. It is likely you will earn a better GPA if your major is something you want to study and your GPA is very important for getting in to law school. Your major should be something that will help you develop the skills you need to be successful; like, reading, writing, researching, and critical thinking.

Frequently Asked Questions

taken from Law School Admission Council at www.lsac.org/

How do I prepare for law school education?

Law schools want students who can think critically and write well, and who have some understanding of the forces that have shaped the human experience. These attributes can be acquired in any number of college courses, whether in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, or the natural sciences.

An undergraduate career that is narrowly based or vocationally oriented may not be the best preparation for law school. As long as you receive an education including critical analysis, logical reasoning, and written and oral expression, the range of acceptable college majors is very broad. What counts is the intensity and depth of your undergraduate program and your capacity to perform well at an academically rigorous level.

What does a legal education cover?

Although you may choose from several different paths to a good legal education, whether the law school you choose is public or private, large or small, faith-related or independent, or affiliated with a university, you'll find that the basic curriculum focuses on certain legal skills required of all lawyers.

A legal education is designed to develop your analytical, creative, and logical reasoning abilities. Going to law school will also strengthen your reading and debating skills.

Lawyers must know how to analyze legal issues in light of the constantly changing state of the law and public policy. They must be able to advocate the views of individuals and diverse interest groups within the context of the legal system. They must be able to synthesize material that relates to multifaceted issues. They must give intelligent counsel on the law's requirements. Moreover, lawyers must write and speak clearly and be able to persuade and negotiate effectively.

Is there a standard law school curriculum?

Not exactly. But in nearly every state, graduation from an ABA-approved law school is required for admission to the bar. Each ABA-approved law school provides basic training in American law sufficient to qualify its graduates to take the bar examination in all states. Most law schools require three years of full-time

attendance, or four years of part-time study, if a part-time program is offered. Although law schools differ in the emphasis they give to certain subjects and in the degree to which they provide opportunities for independent study and clinical experience, nearly all law schools have certain basic similarities. Most law schools rely on the “case method” approach to teaching. First-year curricula usually include courses in civil procedure, constitutional law, contracts, criminal law and criminal procedure, legal methods, legal writing and research, property law, and torts.

Most law schools share a common approach to the task of training lawyers. Many emphasize particular teaching methods, placing students in legal internships for academic credit, or using government or legal resources of a surrounding community. A number of schools have developed specialized programs of instruction combining law with other disciplines such as business, public administration, international relations, science, and technology.

Who is applying to law school?

For Fall 2004, about 25 percent of all law school applicants were 22 years old or younger; about 37 percent were 23 to 25; and about 19 percent were between ages 26 and 29. Applicants who were 30 to 34 years old made up about 10 percent of the applicant pool, while 9 percent were over 34 years old.

A growing number of women began to apply to America’s law schools beginning in the early 1970s, when only 10 percent of all law students were women. Currently, nearly one-half of all applicants are women.

For Fall 2004, there was a record high number of minority applicants (just over 28,000). Although the proportion of all applicants who identified themselves as being from a specific minority group has been relatively stable over the past 10 to 12 years at about 25 percent to 28 percent of the total applicant pool, the actual number of minority applicants has increased in proportion with the total applicant pool. And, the number of minority applicants has more than tripled over the past 20 years.

How can I find out more about law schools?

Look widely and inquire carefully. You really cannot spend too much time or effort gathering and studying information on law schools. Select the law schools to which you will apply only after reviewing the admission material available from each law school on your list of possibilities.

Visit law school websites or write to law schools for their bulletins, catalogs, or other materials that include complete and current information.

Consult your college pre-law advisor. Undergraduate institutions with pre-law advisors or career counselors encourage students and alumni to contact them for assistance—even if you have been out of school for a number of years.

Visit law schools. You can learn a great deal by talking with students and faculty members, and by visiting classes. Talk to alumni of the schools, preferably a recent graduate or one who is active in alumni affairs.

How do I choose a law school?

You should begin the process of choosing a law school with an honest appraisal of your strengths and preferences. You should consider the size, composition, and background of the student body; the location, size, and nature of the surrounding community; the particular strengths or interests of the faculty; the degree to which clinical experience or classroom learning is emphasized; the nature of any special programs offered; the number and type of student organizations; the range of library holdings; and whether a school is public or private. You may wish to consider a school with a strong minority recruitment, retention, and mentoring program, or one with an active student organization for students of your particular ethnic background.

At any rate, you should actually select more than one law school where you think you could succeed. Today, the average applicant applies to four or more schools.

Fulbright College and UA School of Law 3/3 Program

Information obtained from the Fulbright College Advising Center

If you plan to go to the University of Arkansas, you might be interested in knowing about the 3/3 Program. The U of A School of Law at Fayetteville and the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences jointly administer a six-year program whereby highly qualified student may enter law school after their third year of college. Students in Fulbright College are eligible for the 3/3 program under the following conditions:

1. At least 30 consecutive hours of course work in Fulbright College;
2. At least 94 hours credited toward a bachelor's degree by Fulbright College;
3. Completion of Fulbright College's requirements for a major in connection with the bachelor's degree;
4. A cumulative grade-point average in all college or university course work of at least 3.5, without grade renewal;
5. An LSAT score of at least 159.

Students will receive a bachelor's degree after earning the sufficient law school hours required to complete their degree in Fulbright College.