

What Studies Say First-Year Law School Grades Predict for Attorneys

As any attorney who has ever participated in on-campus recruiting is no doubt aware, grades are an extremely important criterion that firms use in the hiring of junior attorneys. Grades are far more important for law students than junior attorneys. Indeed, at no other point in your career will your grades be more important than when you are looking for work just out of law school.

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One of the main reasons that grades are emphasized so much for law students is that firms have very little else to go on when they are making hiring decisions. Firms can look at your college and your performance there. Firms can look at what activities you participated in during law school. Firms can also judge how much they like you. Nevertheless, in terms of judging how serious you are about law school and how much aptitude you show for the practice of law, grades are generally the most important standard that firms use in the hiring of law students.

- See [Law School Grades and Your Career](#) for more information.

In many respects, this is somewhat understandable, and there is support for firms' taking law students' grades so seriously. For example, several studies have been done that have shown that your LSAT score - and not undergraduate grade point average - is the best predictor of your academic performance in your first year of law school. Similarly, there have been studies done that show that your performance in your first year of law school (and not during your second and third years) is the best predictor of whether you will pass your state's bar exam on the first attempt.

The largest and most prestigious firms typically have the most stringent grade cutoffs for law students. In addition, the firms that do on-campus recruiting at your law school also tend to place a great deal of emphasis on grades due to the fact that they can compare the transcripts of many students at one time. Many large national firms will only consider graduates in the top 5% from some national law schools, yet they will consider the upper 50% in the hiring of law students from the very top national law schools. The importance of your grades will generally increase as you go down the law school ranking ladder. For example, if you attended Yale Law School, your grades will be much less important to most law firms than they would be if you attended a fourth-tier law school.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Top 10 Reasons Why Getting a Summer Associate Job with a Large Law Firm is Crucial to Your Legal Career](#)
- [10 Factors That Matter to Big Firms More Than Where You Went to Law School: Why the Law School You Went to Ultimately Does Not Matter as Much as You Think It Does to Major Law Firms](#)