

How to Apply to Law School: A Month-by-Month Guide

As with law school itself, applying to law school requires time, money, and focus. Even though the application process seems straightforward, applicants must put in a lot of thought and preparation.

By starting early, you can avoid headaches and complex decisions in the future. This is a helpful overview of the whole process of applying to law school one month at a time if you are planning to apply next year.

April

The [LSAT](#) and the law school application process can feel so dispiriting, so it is imperative to commit early and wholeheartedly. In the spring, you should do preliminary research, consider the LSAT, and assess whether law school is right for you and whether it will help you achieve your life goals.

Make a balanced list of reasons you are applying to law school to stay focused when you later second-guess yourself. Your college GPA and recommendation letters will improve if you finish the semester strong. Plan summer activities that will help you stand out on your resume.

May

Summer is an excellent time to focus on the LSAT before the post-Labor Day rush begins, whether at school or work. Regardless of how you intend to prepare - through classes, tutoring, online programs, or self-study - give yourself several weeks to master the test.

You will have three months to prepare for the LSAT if you start in late May. If you want to take your LSAT at a popular site, make sure you register early.

June

It would be best if you now had a sense of what to expect on the LSAT. Build your skills and overcome your weaknesses by practicing consistently and consistently.

When you register for your LSAC account, submit transcript request forms via the Credential Assembly Service of the Law School Admission Council. Transcripts from all institutions you attended, including summer and study abroad programs, should be requested.

July

The LSAT is now administered roughly every five weeks, so it is no longer necessary to structure your study schedule around specific test dates. You should have plenty of time to retake the test if you receive a disappointing score or postpone it in case of illness or emergency.

You will have several backup test dates before applying to law schools in the fall if you aim for a July or August test day. Applicants without scores will be accepted, but they will not be considered until scores are received. The scores are released within three weeks, but they may be released sooner with the test being digital.

August

As your summer plans wind down, consider getting your resume in shape. Using your LSAT score and grade, make a list of schools you want to attend. Several safety schools, some reach schools, and several midrange schools where your chances appear decent but not assured should be included in your list.

September

By September, you should have finished your personal statement so that you can revise, reflect, and seek feedback. Send an email to possible recommenders since professors and employers will likely be back from vacation.

Send them the letters at least a month in advance. Do not write the letters yourself; instead, provide clear instructions and offer suggestions.

By September, most law schools open their applications. Applicants should carefully read the application since short-answer questions and supplemental essay prompts may vary yearly.

October

Along with your other application materials, write your personal statement. Review an application checklist to make sure nothing is missing.

Many schools offer early decision options, with deadlines as early as November 1. Due to the rolling admissions cycle, you will have a better chance of admission if you submit early. Your application should not get lost as [admissions officers receive a flood of applications](#).

November

In many cases, applicants forget how much time each extra application takes because they focus on applying to their top choices. There are often additional essays or questions. Take your time to complete and double-check each application so that you avoid careless mistakes. Prioritize the schools you are most interested in but do not rush the process.

December

Make sure you submit any outstanding applications. You can apply as late as February, but before the winter holidays, your best chance is to apply.

You can send a concise, courteous email to any questions you have about the process or to update your application if you have received a promotion or award.

The Next Year

Depending on when you applied and other factors, application decisions usually arrive between December and April. Waiting too long is not a bad sign.

Visit the schools you strongly consider once you hear back. Consider sending a letter of continued interest and an update to the school if you are on a waitlist. Scholarship negotiations may be necessary if competing offers are received.

Once you have selected a law school, spend the summer before your first year getting settled and preparing.

What is the timeline for law school admissions?

1. Prep for the LSAT

The LSAT registration deadline is about a month in advance of each test date.

January: Take a free [LSAT practice test](#) to calculate your diagnostic score.

February: Start thinking about a February LSAT prep course (we strongly recommend in-person or online courses).

March: Check upcoming LSAT test dates, registration deadlines, and the logistical information you will need to know for the big day.

2. Register for CAS

Credential Assembly Service (CAS) is a service provided by the LSAC and is required by most ABA-accredited law schools. CAS compiles a report with your transcript, LSAT scores, and letters of recommendation for a fee. You will receive a copy of your CAS report from the law schools you choose after you apply.

July: Aim to register for the CAS around July so that you can complete your file as soon as possible.

3. Submit your transcripts and letters of recommendation to CAS

August: Request that your transcripts be sent to the CAS by your colleges.

September: Identify professors who are familiar with you well enough to offer solid predictions (and positive impressions) about your future performance. You should ask for recommendations in September when professors are getting back into their routine.

4. Search for Law Schools

Make sure your test scores and GPA fit comfortably into the application pool by looking at school stats. Your

best option is to apply to a mix of reach, match, and safety schools.

August: Make contact with your prelaw advisor and decide what schools you would like to attend. Find law schools by narrowing your list by location, specialty, and other factors that matter to you.

5. Apply to Law Schools

You will have a relatively easy time completing your applications, but your personal statement will benefit from careful ruminations and multiple revisions. To ensure that your personal statement reflects your character, get someone who knows you well and has a good critical eye to read it. If you can clearly describe what interests you about law and why you are applying, the admissions officers will be more receptive to your application.

September: Start working on your law school applications and personal statements in early September.

November: Aim to submit all your law school applications by late November or early December, regardless of the official deadline.

What determines law school admissions?

Law school admissions officers must review thousands of applications every year to fill classes of only a few hundred students.

We have identified the following five factors that are heavily weighed in admissions decisions and the distribution of merit-based aid.

1. LSAT Score: [LSAT scores are used by admissions committees](#) to compare applicants from diverse academic, professional, and personal backgrounds objectively since the LSAT is heavily regulated across test dates and administration sites.

Law schools use LSAT scores to evaluate students' logical reasoning, analytical skills, and reading abilities, which are essential for success in law school. Despite its shortcomings, ABA-approved law schools put considerable weight on the LSAT since it has a higher correlation with law school academic performance than undergraduate GPA.

2. Undergraduate GPA: The undergraduate GPA summarizes your college career, so admissions committees view it as an indication of your academic performance and your motivation and perseverance.

With a high GPA, you probably work hard in school and will probably be able to handle the academic rigors of law school. Law School Admission Council (LSAC) combines your [LSAT score and your undergraduate GPA](#) (including all college-level classes you have taken at any school) to create a school-specific formula that is used to benchmark you against other applicants to that school.

Additional factors like undergraduate college and significant will come into play later in the process when the committee is evaluating your individual application, but you should be aware that even in this subsequent, more individualized evaluation, having a notoriously difficult major, like engineering, will not be perceived as a valid justification for a significantly lower grade point average.

3. Leadership experience: Group leadership demonstrates to the admissions committees your ability to make a significant contribution to their community and society as a whole. Through student clubs and organizations, volunteer activities, classroom projects, work experience, and more, you can gain this experience.

As an applicant, you should get involved in a few groups during your freshman year of college and pursue leadership roles afterward.

Show what you have accomplished as a leader as well. Consider showing the tangible results of your leadership instead of stating that you were president of your fraternity.

4. Reason for Attending Law School: There was an increase in applications for law school during the recession due to a sluggish job market. Even though this phenomenon has subsided a bit recently, admissions committees are still wary of applicants' intentions, so show them through your application essays that you must get a J.D.

[In order to get into law school](#), admissions officers will want to know how you plan to accomplish your career goals with a law degree. In order to connect with the admissions committee personally, academically, and professionally, highlight the compelling events that led you to pursue a career in law.

5. Recommendations: These serve as third-party evaluations of your academic and professional performance.

The recommendation of a professor is particularly useful because they can speak to your academic intellect and interest in law and how it relates to your undergraduate studies. Professors likely have taught hundreds of other law school applicants, which can assist the admissions committee in comparing you to others at your school.

Admissions committees now expect overly enthusiastic recommendations full of compelling examples for why you are such an exceptional applicant, so choose recommenders who are not too reserved when evaluating applicants, as this could be viewed negatively by the admissions committee.

See Also: [The LSAT Is No Longer Required At These And Other Law Schools: Why Law Schools Are Ditching The LSAT](#)

Can I still apply to law school after the deadline?

Every year, applicants are plagued by this question. Is it better to submit an application early (with an old LSAT score) or wait for a new LSAT score? Check out this guide!

Do I Wait For New LSAT Scores Or Submit My Law School Application?

As early as possible is the short answer to this question. You should not expect admissions offices to review it and make a decision until they receive your new LSAT score. It is still quite early in the season (late November at the time of writing), so you do not have to worry too much about submitting your application now or in late November/December. Why? It will not make much of a difference in practice (absent any early decision deadlines, of course). Whether you have a new score or not, it is imperative that you submit your application prior to the closing date in the spring.

HOW IT WORKS

Your application is reviewed when it is "complete," meaning it has all of the required components and at least one LSAT score. However, since you indicated in your e-app that you plan to take an upcoming [LSAT exam](#), your application will be placed on "hold" until you submit your new LSAT score. Since the submission will not be reviewed until the new scores are received, it matters little if you submit it early. (Be aware that the [application process](#) may differ if your LSAT is next month versus next June.)

CAVEAT & WHAT TO DO:

Some schools might take a slightly different approach to pending LSAT scores. In the end, most either hold your application until your LSAT score comes in (which seems to be the majority) or let you decide. The latter requires you to email the admissions office explicitly requesting that they review your file without a new score.

If you have the option, we recommend asking for an immediate review only if your LSAT is higher than their median. You will be able to take advantage of rolling admissions. They may even review your application without seeing your new score if you already have an excellent LSAT score.) If your LSAT score falls below their median, wait until you receive your new score. It may increase your chances of admission.

Furthermore, keep in mind that human error is always a factor when processing applications. It is a very small possibility that your application may be reviewed prematurely if you submit it before you have the [LSAT scores on file](#). A complete and otherwise "reviewable" application contains all of the necessary components. If you indicated the date of your upcoming test, there is very little chance of your application being reviewed prematurely, but it can happen depending on the organization of the admissions office.

In another, more common scenario, you did not indicate on your e-application that you would take an upcoming test. You will have to request reconsideration when a new LSAT score is released if this is the case and a decision is rendered before a new score is submitted. (Pro-tip: even if you received a positive scholarship decision, ask for a reconsideration based on a higher score.)

Upon submitting your application, send an email to clarify any confusion with multiple LSAT scores. Let them know whether you would like to hold your application for review until your LSAT score comes out or if you would like it reviewed immediately.

MEETING DEADLINES

Waiting until new scores come out might not be a big deal for most people. However, in some cases it does. Do not submit your application after receiving your new score if you are trying to meet an application/scholarship deadline. (Legal tip #1: read details and follow instructions. Deadlines are deadlines.) This is particularly true if it is later in the year. You need to have your applications submitted before a closing deadline. Then you must submit your application as-is with an old score. The new score will be added later.

EARLY DECISION

Admissions will most likely review your application as-is if you applied early decision this fall and your November LSAT score is not yet available. Your application will be reviewed prior to the release of a new score for early decision applicants. If you wait for your new LSAT score to become available, you will likely miss the early decision deadline.

Early decision deadlines are stringent. You will not be considered for early final decisions if you miss the deadline due to waiting for new scores. As a result, you will be added to the general pool of applications, which is often more competitive.

See Also: [The Law School Admission Test: How Will The Change In LSAT Reporting Affect Students?](#)

Conclusion

Generally, there is no harm in submitting your application early, and it is always recommended. If nothing else, this can speed up the review of your application by a few days. The scores will be added to applications as soon as they are released. Your application will then be eligible for review if it is otherwise complete. It is faster than waiting to receive your LSAT score and then turning around and submitting your application. After each set of LSAT scores is released, there is a huge rush of applications. There could be a dramatic difference in the time it takes for your application to be reviewed and your decision to be made.