



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

THE CHAPMAN STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THINKING ABOUT LAW SCHOOL

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Topics:

- I. While at Chapman
- II. Extracurricular Activities
- III. The LSAT
- IV. Choosing a Law School
- V. The Personal Statement
- VI. Letters of Recommendation
- VII. Consider Taking "Time Off"



I. While at Chapman

A. GPA

1. Remember that your early GPA counts
2. For better or worse, GPA counts for a great deal
 - a. Based on an index score of LSAT + GPA, law schools divide applicants into “Automatic Yes,” “Automatic No,” and “Maybe” - try not to be an “Automatic No”
 - b. The index score requirements vary based on law school selectivity; there’s probably some law school you can get into (but proceed with your eyes open and don’t take on too much debt for a school with poor income potential)

B. Honors and Academic Awards

1. You will be asked about these on your law school application; will you have any to report?
2. Truman, Fulbright, Marshall, Rhodes, Coro are among the best, BUT...
3. Many other significant awards exist (Chapman awards; Departmental awards)

C. Courses

1. No necessary courses for pre-law sequence, BUT...
2. Certain courses let you know what you're in for...
 - a. POSC 341, 342, 343 Constitutional Law
 - b. HIST 322 Global History of the U.S. Civil Rights Era
 - c. ECON 200 Principles of Microeconomics
3. Certain courses help your abilities...
 - a. COM 101/102 Public Speaking; COM 210 Theories of Persuasion
 - b. PHIL 203 Logic, PHIL 300 Symbolic Logic
 - c. PHIL 318 Political and Legal Philosophy, PHIL 324 Philosophy of Law
 - d. HUM 312 Writing in the Legal Context (or other composition courses)
4. Common majors
 - a. Political Science
 - b. Sociology and/or Criminal Justice
 - c. Psychology
 - d. History
 - e. Business/Economics
 - f. English
5. Consider Independent Study—esp Student Scholar Symposium or other presentation
 - a. Enrich your education and add something significant to your profile
 - b. May even lead to a publication or presentation

D. Get to know your professors (but don't be a pest 😊)

1. Somebody has to write a letter of recommendation
2. Academic letters of recommendation are the most important

E. Be sure law school is what you really want

1. Check with the folks in Career and Professional Development Office
2. Consider alternative careers

II. Extracurricular Activities

A. Involvement matters

1. It is important to construct a file that "looks good"
2. File should represent on paper who you really are
3. Make it **real** - they've seen many who are just faking it for a line on the resume

B. On campus involvement

1. Peer Conduct Boards, Associated Students
2. Greeks, sports, social groups
3. Academic interest activities
4. Service activities
 - a. Peer counseling, tutoring, etc.
 - b. D.O.C., Hillel, MSA, etc.

C. Off-campus involvement

1. Jobs (even if just to make money it shows something about you)
2. Volunteer work (can be anything – whatever motivates you)
3. Internships (try to show prolonged engagement and interest)
 - a. Juvenile Hall, Orangewood
 - b. Law firms (note: useful but not at all required)
 - c. Political campaigns, government offices
 - (1) Remember local government
 - d. ACLU and similar legal services organizations
4. Off-campus coursework
 - a. Washington Semester, internship programs (including international)
 - b. Study Abroad or travel courses
 - c. Special courses (mediation training, etc.)

D. Get to know somebody who can write a letter of recommendation



III. The Application Process and the LSAT – for official information and an overview, see <https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school>

- A. Register with the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), which provides access to the common application and the LSAT
 1. Register and prepare for the LSAT
 2. Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
 3. Request all required transcripts
 4. Request letters of recommendation
 5. Apply online using the LSAC process
 6. Attend an LSAC Forum (see <https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/law-school-forums-and-fairs>)
- B. LSAT schedule: March, April, June, August, October, November, January, February
 1. January and February are too late for many schools if you want to go to law school that Fall, especially if you hope for some financial aid.
 2. Best practice: Take the test about 10 months ahead of your planned enrollment. If you want to go to Law School in Fall 2022, for example, shoot for taking the exam by October 2021.
 3. NOTE: Registration deadlines are usually 7 to 8 weeks prior to the test date; if you plan to take the test in October, you need to register by late August.
 4. Schedule taking the LSAT a bit earlier than you need to, so you have the option of taking a later test if you want (e.g. you may want to reschedule or retake the exam)
- C. What kind of test prep should you do?
 1. Test Prep can include self-study, online programs, in-person classes, or even private tutoring. You should plan to do some sort of prep; you usually can improve your score by at least a few points.
 2. How much should you study and how much should you pay? It depends on your history with standardized tests—do you do well or not so well?
 3. You should take several practice tests, BUT...
 4. Never take the real LSAT "just for practice" - multiple tests are no longer averaged at most law schools, but they are always seen
 5. See what prep programs are available in the area - Kaplan, Princeton Review, Blueprint, Testmasters, and many more. LSAC has its own prep services, in partnership with Khan Academy.
 6. Talk to people who have used the services

Schedule of LSAT testing dates 2021-22

August 2021 (week of August 14)
October 2021 (week of October 9)
November 2021 (week of November 13)
January 2022 (week of January 15)
February 2022 (week of February 12)
March 2022 (week of March 12)
April-May 2022 (week of April 30)
June 2022 (week of June 11)

IV. Choosing a Law School

A. Find several schools that seem right for you

1. Use guides to Law Schools (available online and at the Libraries and the Career and Professional Development Office)
2. Carefully study catalogs and promotional materials
 - a. Attend the LSAC Forum held each November in L.A.
3. Specialization and focus of schools differ - find one you like
4. Location
 - a. Important but not everything
 - b. Look beyond just the schools you know

The 2021 LSAC Law School Forums Schedule

Friday, September 10 - digital
Saturday, September 25 - Chicago
Friday, October 8 - San Francisco
Friday, October 22 - Atlanta
Friday and Saturday, November 5 and 6 - New York City
Saturday, November 13 - Los Angeles
Saturday, December 4 - digital
Saturday, February 5 - digital

B. Consider ABA schools that have recently accepted Chapman students

Recent Admits: U of Alabama, Albany U, American U, Arizona State U, Ave Maria U, Barry U, Baylor U, Belmont U, Boston College, Boston U, U of Buffalo, UC-Berkeley, UC-Hastings, UCI, UCLA, California Western, Catholic U, Chapman U, Charleston, Chicago-Kent U, CUNY, Creighton U, U of Denver, DePaul U, Drexel U, Duke U, Emory U, Elon U, Faulkner U, Fordham U, George Washington U, Georgetown U, Golden Gate U, Gonzaga U, Hofstra U, U of Houston, U of Idaho, Indiana U Bloomington, U of Kentucky, U of La Verne, Lewis & Clark U, Loyola U LA, Loyola U Chicago, Marquette U, U of Massachusetts, U of Pacific McGeorge, U of Memphis, U of Miami, U of Minnesota, U of Mississippi, Mitchell Hamline, UNLV, New England Law, New York U, Northeastern U, Northwestern U, U of Notre Dame, Nova Southeastern U, U of Oregon, Pepperdine U, Quinnipiac U, Roger Williams U, St John's U, St Mary's Law, U of St Thomas Minneapolis, U of San Diego, U of San Francisco, Santa Clara U, Seattle U, U of South Texas, Southern Methodist U, USC, Southwestern Law School, Stetson U, Suffolk U, U of Tennessee, U of Texas, Texas A&M U, Texas Southern U, Texas Tech U, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, Touro College, Tulane U, U of Tulsa, U of Utah, Vanderbilt U, Vermont Law, U of Virginia, U of Washington, Washington & Lee U, Washington U, Western Michigan U Cooley, Western New England, Western State College Of Law, Willamette U



C. Build a "ladder" of applications

1. Figure out what schools are realistic for you, THEN...
2. Apply to some schools above what you expect to get into
3. Apply to some schools you expect to get into
4. Apply to some schools below what you expect to get into

D. Don't apply to a law school you really won't be willing to attend (why waste your time and money?)

E. ABA v. non-ABA

1. Remember, non-ABA degrees usually not valid in states other than California
2. Larger firms usually won't hire people without ABA degree

V. The Personal Statement (for application)

A. The statement should be a piece of advocacy—for yourself.

- a. *Build a narrative about yourself* using evidence from your transcript, resume, and letters of recommendation.
- b. Show them who you really are.
- c. Tie together your activities, coursework, and interests. Don't just restate your resume in narrative form.

B. Communicate the "fire" that motivates you, BUT...

- a. Be careful of trying to be too creative
- b. Don't be trite or melodramatic
- c. Remember, they've seen it all before

C. Use the statement to explain problems with your file

- a. For example, explain poor grades (perhaps related to personal difficulties) or an early departure from a position on your resume.
- b. Don't explain low LSAT scores by saying "I'm a poor test taker" - after all, there are a lot of tests in law school.

D. Every word has to count (write and rewrite - get help from the Writing Center, faculty members, etc.)

VI. Letters of Recommendation

A. Get to know someone who can give you a good letter

B. When you ask for that letter, give the writer enough information to work with

1. Give them your personal statement, transcript, and resume
2. Remind them of how they know you, and what they supposedly know about you
3. Talk with them about your goals and plans
4. Let them know about any special circumstances you think would help them write a stronger letter

C. Give them enough time to write the letter, and then (politely 😊) check up on them to see that they've sent it

VII. Consider taking "time off"

- A. Average age of 1st year students is up to 27 in some schools
- B. Don't be in a hurry if you don't have to, BUT...
 - 1. Don't waste time; do something with the time
 - 2. If you have an unimpressive job, get involved in some impressive activities outside of your job (community service, volunteering, religious organizations, etc.)
- C. Maturity and increasing responsibility impresses law schools
- D. Post-college education, employment, and activities can help (a bit) to forgive lower GPA and LSAT



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