



Overview of Application Components

Overview

Potential law school applicants should **create a JD Account** at <https://www.lsac.org/>.

LSAC is the Law School Admission Council and is the website used for both registering for the LSAT and applying to law schools. LSAC also offers plenty of valuable information to help potential applicants discover different fields of law, learn how to apply to law schools, and how to determine which schools they may want to apply to and ultimately attend.

After creating a JD account, potential applicants should continue exploring the law school application process and conducting research on the practice of law to ensure that law school is the right fit for their goals and interests. After deciding that law school is the intended path, the next major step for potential applicants is to review the application components below and to become familiar with the application timeline. In general, applying to law school can take a year or longer, and potential applicants should do ample research to ensure they develop a competitive application and increase their potential for successful outcomes.

We highly encourage potential applicants to schedule a pre-law advising appointment to discuss their goals, review the application process, and plan their next steps. To schedule a pre-law advising appointment, please visit <https://as.ua.edu/advising/make-an-appointment/>

Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

The **Law School Admission Test (LSAT)** is an entrance exam required at many law schools. The LSAT is designed to test skills such as reading comprehension and logical reasoning. While alternative admissions pathways and exams exist at some schools, **only around 5% of applicants each year apply without taking the LSAT**. Given this, most students should plan to take the LSAT. However, we recommend discussing your plans with a pre-law advisor and thoroughly reviewing the admissions requirements of the schools you are interested in.

The LSAT does not test your skills of memorization, and it does not require any pre-existing knowledge of the law. Furthermore, it is not an IQ test. Instead, the LSAT is a skills-based test, testing your logical reasoning, reading comprehension, and writing skills. The skills tested on the LSAT can be improved upon with sufficient preparation. As with learning a language or a musical instrument, the LSAT requires significant study and practice over an extended period of time.

→ **For additional info about the LSAT, refer to the LSAT Guide:**
<https://prelaw.ua.edu/applicant-resources/>

Alternative admissions pathways

While around 95% of applicants take the LSAT, there are a few alternative admissions pathways open at some law schools.

GRE

The most common alternative to the LSAT is the **Graduate Record Examination (GRE)**. The GRE is an entrance exam required by many graduate school programs. The GRE differs from the LSAT most notably in the format and types of questions. While the LSAT tests logical reasoning and reading comprehension, the GRE tests verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning (math), and analytical writing.

The GRE may be beneficial for applicants with a strong background in math and/or for those who are considering applying to other graduate programs that require the GRE. However, the GRE is not accepted at every law school, and applicants may be at a disadvantage if applying as a GRE-only applicant. Many schools weigh the LSAT more significantly, and some schools may give no scholarship or reduced scholarship for GRE-only admits.

The bottom line is that each school's approach to GRE-only applicants is particular to each school, so potential applicants will want to do their research to determine whether they need to take the LSAT and whether the GRE makes sense for their educational plans and application strategy. Less than 5% of applicants are GRE-only applicants.

School Specific Alternative and Conditional Admissions Programs

Some law schools offer specific admissions programs which may or may not require an LSAT or other graduate entrance exam. Potential applicants will want to do their research on each school of interest to discover all of the admissions pathways available at their schools of interest.

For example, **the University of Alabama School of Law has the 503 Alternative Admissions Program.** Applicants through the 503 Program are not required to have an LSAT score or a letter of recommendation. The 503 Program is designed for undergraduate students at The University of Alabama and applicants must meet additional eligibility requirements concerning undergraduate GPA, minimum percentile on the ACT/SAT, and particular graduation and academic requirements.

→ For more info on the 503 program at UA Law, visit <https://law.ua.edu/apply/>.

Personal Statement

Most schools require a personal statement or other essay(s) to assess a candidate's writing ability and also gain valuable insight into applicants beyond their GPA and test scores. Individual guidelines and prompts for the personal statement vary from school to school. Most schools will recommend a 2-3 page personal statement. Potential applicants will want to ensure they follow the specific guidelines for each school.

→ For additional info about personal statements, refer to the **Personal Statements guide:** <https://prelaw.ua.edu/applicant-resources/>

Resume

The resume allows a potential applicant to highlight their experiences, activities, involvement, skills, interests, and additional information for the admissions committees to consider as they evaluate the applicant's readiness for law school. Individual guidelines and prompts for the resume vary from school to school. Most schools will recommend a 1-2 page resume. Potential applicants will want to ensure they follow the specific guidelines for each school.

→ For additional info about resumes, refer to the **Resume Guide**:
<https://prelaw.ua.edu/applicant-resources/>

Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

LSAC's **Credential Assembly Service (CAS)** compiles your transcripts, letters of recommendation, LSAT score, and any other documents required for each of your law school applications into a full report that is sent to each law school. All ABA-approved law school applications are available electronically through your CAS account. Most ABA-approved law schools in the United States require that JD applicants use CAS. If you are applying to schools in Canada, CAS is not required.

Many applicants purchase CAS in the summer or early fall before they plan to apply. The CAS subscription is good for five years. You should sign up at least four to six weeks before your first law school application deadline. It takes approximately two weeks to process a transcript and up to five business days to process a paper letter of recommendation from the time LSAC receives it. Electronic letters of recommendation are usually available as soon as LSAC receives them.

As of the 2024-2025 academic year, CAS costs \$207 and each CAS report sent to a school costs \$45 (so, 5 applications will cost $\$207 + \$45 \text{ five times} = \432). In addition to the cost of CAS and the CAS reports, some schools charge application fees typically between \$45-100. Candidates should check if schools offer an application fee waiver. Law school candidates who are financially under-resourced can also apply for an **LSAC fee waiver** to cover many of the costs related to applying to law school, including the CAS subscription fee and up to six CAS Reports.

Letters of Recommendation

Many schools require multiple letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation help law school admissions officers gain more insight and perspective about applicants by providing:

1. Evaluation of an applicant's academic and professional potential and qualifications
2. Commentary on an applicant's character, work ethic, and personality
3. Context and additional insight into an applicant's readiness for law school

While these letters serve as a supplemental piece in the application process, they can play a significant role in admissions decisions.

We recommend potential applicants strive to secure 3 strong letters of recommendation:

2 academic letters from professors and 1 non-academic letter from a supervisor, mentor, coach, etc. For applicants who have been out of school for a while, letters from supervisors will be more common, easier to acquire, and potentially more relevant than those from a professor.

→ **For additional info about letters, refer to the [Letters of Recommendation Guide:](https://prelaw.ua.edu/applicant-resources/)**
<https://prelaw.ua.edu/applicant-resources/>

Transcripts

LSAC requires official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you've attended. It is your responsibility to request these transcripts be sent directly to LSAC. Law schools require transcripts from the following institutions you have attended:

- Community colleges
- Undergraduate and graduate institutions
- Law, medical, or professional institutions
- Institutions attended for summer or evening courses
- Institutions attended even though a degree was never received
- Institutions from which you took college-level courses while in high school even though they were for high school credit
- Institutions that **clearly sponsored** your overseas study
- **International transcripts**, if applicable

Official transcripts must be sent from institutions even if the credit appears on another institution's transcript; even if the institution is closed; and even if the only grades listed are "Withdraw" or "Incomplete." LSAC will not accept transcripts issued to or sent by you. Official transcripts must be sent to LSAC directly from each institution.

Graduate course work completed as part of the Bachelor's degree will count in LSAC's GPA calculation (e.g., courses completed in the Accelerated Master's Program).

→ **For more info on transcripts:**

- <https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school/jd-application-process/cas/requesting>

Addenda / Optional Statements and Character and Fitness Questions

Addendum or Optional Statement

A law school addendum is a brief, supplementary document that applicants can include with their law school applications to explain any discrepancies or unusual aspects of their academic or personal history, including significant hardships or responsibilities the candidate may have in their lived experience including homelessness, caretaking responsibilities, and so forth.

Common reasons for submitting an addendum include addressing a semester of unusually low grades, explaining gaps in education, clarifying significant LSAT score differences between multiple tests (e.g., 5+ point differences between tests), or providing necessary and required disclosure for any disciplinary actions or legal issues.

The goal of an addendum (sometimes referred to as an “optional statement”) is to provide additional context that helps the admissions committee understand the applicant's circumstances and mitigate any potential concerns. Not all matters necessitate an addendum, and candidates should be judicious in their determination of when to include one.

→ **For more info on addenda/optional statements:**

- <https://blog.law.shu.edu/off-the-record/when-and-how-to-write-an-addendum-to-your-law-school-application>

Character and Fitness Questions

Applications to law schools will also contain questions for candidates related to matters of character and fitness. These questions are often designed to overlap with those asked in the bar admissions for the jurisdiction the law school is located in. **Candidates are required to disclose certain information if the school specifically requests that information**, which could include matters like speeding tickets but also more commonly will ask about academic misconduct, student misconduct, and other legal matters. Candidates should review each question carefully, and **it is best to err on the side of caution and candidly disclose information that seems relevant to the questions asked**. If in doubt, candidates can always ask the admissions office of the law school for further clarification.

→ **For more info on Character and Fitness questions:**

- <https://app.lawhub.org/article/character-and-fitness-questions>
- <https://blog.law.shu.edu/off-the-record/when-and-how-to-write-an-addendum-to-your-law-school-application>

Additional Resources and Links

- [LSAC Applying to Law School](#) (main LSAC page for applying to law school)
- [LSAC Steps to Apply to JD Programs](#) (list of steps needed to apply to law school)
- [AccessLex Pre-Law Resources](#) (free pre-law educational resources)
- [Navigating Law School Admissions Podcast](#) (podcast from Yale/Harvard admissions)
- [A2Z with Dean Z](#) (podcast from Michigan Law’s Dean of Admissions)
- [ABA Disclosures](#) (data on admissions, scholarships, employment, bar passage, etc.)