



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
Office of Pre-Law Advising

# PRE-LAW HANDBOOK

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**BEREN CAMPUS:**

Illana J Milch Academic and Pre-Law Advisor  
Stern College for Women  
215 Lexington Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
[illana.milch@yu.edu](mailto:illana.milch@yu.edu)  
PH: 646-592-4161

**WILF CAMPUS:**

Lolita A. Wood-Hill, MS  
Executive Director, Pre-Professional Advising Programs  
Yeshiva College  
500 W. 185th St., Furst 107A  
NY, NY 10033  
[woodhill@yu.edu](mailto:woodhill@yu.edu) PH: 646-592-4426

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# **WELCOME**

Welcome to Pre-Law Advising at Yeshiva University. We are delighted to have you here! I look forward to helping you navigate each step of the way toward your career in the law.

It's never too early to start the process. The Office of Pre-Law Advisement provides one-on-one guidance to students (and alumni) from the time they begin to consider a career in the law until they matriculate in law school. Students are encouraged to meet with the pre-law adviser at least once per semester to map out their courses, learn of internship opportunities and, in their later years, draft their personal statements and complete their law school applications.

It is also important to get involved on campus and outside of your community. Law schools like to see applicants who are actively engaged in their undergraduate institutions and their communities. The Pre-Law Office provides information about internships, volunteer opportunities and Pre-Law events. An important first step for participating in these programs is to sign up for the pre-law listserv. To join the listserv, please email Debbie Beaudreau at [beaudrea@yu.edu](mailto:beaudrea@yu.edu).

We look forward to working with each of you throughout your undergraduate experience. We are happy to respond to any questions or concerns you may have about the process or about whether law school makes sense for you.

We look forward to meeting you.

Best Wishes,

Lolita Wood-Hill, MS  
Executive Director, Pre-Professional  
Advising Programs, Yeshiva College

Illana Milch  
Pre-Law Adviser, Stern College

# **YOUR PRE-LAW ADVISING TEAM**

## **Office of Pre-Law Advising**

### **WILF**

Lolita Wood-Hill, MS  
Executive Director, Pre-Professional Advising Programs  
[woodhill@yu.edu](mailto:woodhill@yu.edu)

Debbie Beaudreau  
Pre-Professional Advisement Coordinator  
[beaudrea@yu.edu](mailto:beaudrea@yu.edu)

Office of Pre-Professional Advising  
500 West 185th Street  
Furst Hall, Room 107A  
646.592.4426

### **BEREN**

Illana J Milch  
Academic and Pre-Law Advisor  
Stern College for Women  
215 Lexington Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
646-592-4161

### **CONSULTANT**

Betty Sugarman, Ph.D  
[betty.sugarman@yu.edu](mailto:betty.sugarman@yu.edu)

Dr. Sugarman is available to students from both Beren and Wilf campuses to review their personal essays.

## **The Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development**

YU has a full-service Career Center to help with resumes, and internships, as well as law-specific personal statement guidance.

### **Contact information:**

Wilf Career Center:  
Furst Hall, Suite 413,  
646-592-4090

Beren Career Center:  
215 Lex, 5th Floor,  
646-592-4135  
Email: [careercenter@yu.edu](mailto:careercenter@yu.edu)  
Web: [www.yu.edu/career-center](http://www.yu.edu/career-center)

### **Office of Academic Support**

The Office of Academic Support is available to work with students on improving study skills such as time management, critical reading, note-taking, and test-taking. Please email for an appointment.

Daphne Herskowitz, M.S. Ed.  
Associate Director of Academic Support  
Furst Hall 412  
646-592-4285  
[academicsupportwilf@yu.edu](mailto:academicsupportwilf@yu.edu)

Lainee Grauman, M.S. Learning Specialist  
Furst Hall 412  
646-592-4285  
[academicsupportwilf@yu.edu](mailto:academicsupportwilf@yu.edu)

### **The Office of Disability Services**

The Office of Disability Services collaborates with students, faculty and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and services to students who self-identify as having a disability. If you would like to discuss your particular situation and your disability related needs, please contact the Office of Disability Services in person, via e-mail or by phone using the information provided below:

#### **WILF CAMPUS**

Abigail Kelsen, LMSW, LCSW  
Assistant Director of Disability Services  
Yeshiva University, Manhattan Campus  
646-592-4280  
[akelsen@yu.edu](mailto:akelsen@yu.edu)

BEREN CAMPUS  
Dr. Rochelle Cohen  
[rkohn1@yu.edu](mailto:rkohn1@yu.edu)  
215 Lexington Room 505  
646 592 4132

# **COVID-19 and LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

While most law schools are reopening their campuses to in person classes and activities, for most aspiring students in the application cycle, the doors may still prove hard to open.

According to a recent *US News and World Report*, during the pandemic applications to law schools have increased 17% for the 2021 cycle and 15% for the 2020 cycle. The article describes the situation: "Law schools are predicting little movement on their wait lists, unprecedented first-year class sizes and less room for transfer applicants."

Why the increase? Reginald McGahee, Associate Dean of Admissions And Student Affairs at the Howard University School of Law says, "people who have been contemplating law school for a long time had more time for soul-searching during quarantine. With that time and space for introspection, some individuals realized that they wanted to become lawyers...The pandemic has forced a number of people to really take stock of the fragility of life and the importance of doing things that are fulfilling and nurture you and advance the goals that you set for yourself. He adds that while people had to "slow down" during the pandemic, they couldn't distract themselves from big questions about what a good life is. "We've been able to focus on those things that are really important to us, and I think that a lot of people are reconnecting with the idea that, if I'm going to work, let me add something to society that I didn't really think that I was adding before."

What can you do? According to prelaw admission officers, the main action an applicant can take is to SUBMIT EARLY. This does not mean rush through the process and submit a less than perfect application in order to save time. It means understand the process, prepare in advance, and be ready to submit the strongest application with competitive GPA and LSAT scores as early in the cycle as possible. Applications normally open in the fall, so prepare accordingly. In the current climate, applications with strong scores are declined because they are submitted too late.

The bright side is that the field of law itself should weather the storm. According to the *US News* article, "While the coronavirus pandemic may be incalculably tragic, it should have limited long-term impact on the legal field. Many large law firms already have raised associate salaries in anticipation of increased demand for business, after responding to the pandemic with pay cuts, furloughs of administrative staff and other cost-cutting measures. Relatively few law firms or law jobs have disappeared, unlike during the Great Recession."

## **RELATED ARTICLES:**

<https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/articles/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-on-legal-education>

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/articles/law-school-applications-rise-what-it-means-for-jd-hopefuls>

# **PRE-LAW EDUCATION**

Law schools do not prefer or require any specific major. Yeshiva University endorses the view of the American Bar Association that no particular major or set of courses should be considered the 'best' preparation for law school. We suggest the pursuit of challenging, well-balanced courses which emphasize the acquisition of certain skills and bodies of knowledge, such as critical reading, writing, and analysis. The undergraduate experience should be a time to explore the University's varied academic offerings, to perfect skills and learning abilities, and to demonstrate expertise in an academic discipline. While some students choose to major in the traditional Pre-Law majors such as English, political science, history, and economics, other successful law school applicants have majored in subjects as diverse as music, biology, , mathematics and business.

Admissions committees will consider the difficulty of the major and look for applicants who challenge themselves academically while enrolling in a broad-based course of study. Students who choose a heavily technical or quantitative major (i.e. hard sciences, computer science or math) would be well-advised to balance out their studies with a number of writing intensive humanities classes to demonstrate their ability to read critically and communicate effectively.

## **Knowledge Areas**

The American Bar Association has identified seven areas of knowledge that serve as the best foundation for legal studies:

- ✓ History, particularly American, and an understanding of the political, cultural, and economic factors that led to the development of our society in the United States
- ✓ Political thought and theory, and the American political system
- ✓ Ethical theory and theories of justice
- ✓ Economics, especially microeconomic theory
- ✓ Basic mathematical and financial skills, including pre-calculus mathematics and the ability to analyze financial data
- ✓ An understanding of human behavior and social interaction
- ✓ An appreciation of the diversity of cultures within and beyond the United States, international institutions, and increasing global interdependence

## Specific Skills

The core skills necessary to succeed in law school are:

- ✓ analytic/problem-solving skills;
- ✓ critical reading;
- ✓ writing;
- ✓ oral communication;
- ✓ listening abilities;
- ✓ research skills,
- ✓ time-management and organization.

These skills will provide a solid foundation for a legal education. Law school will further refine these skills, but students should enter with reasonably well-developed abilities in these areas.

Students should take a number of courses that require extensive reading, research, writing, and oral presentations, especially advanced level and honors seminars, English composition, literature and public speaking courses.. **The importance of oral and written communication skills cannot be overstated.** Additionally, mathematics, computer science (COM 1300), economics (ECO 1031, ECO 1041), logic (PHI 1100), and the natural sciences will aid in the development of analytical and quantitative skills. Finally, students considering international law or law in a bilingual community should take advantage of opportunities to learn languages and to study abroad through one of Yeshiva University's programs.

Some students find it difficult to determine whether law will be a suitable career choice. They may want to explore the law school option by enrolling in one or two law-oriented courses to gauge their interest in this area. Some suggestions below:

**BUSINESS:** 1001H Business in a Global Environment; Business and Jewish Law BLW 2500

**COMPUTER SCIENCE:** COM 1001 Programming for Non-CS Majors; COM 1300 Intro to Computer Programming;

**ECONOMICS:** 1031 Intro to Economics (Micro); 1041 Intro to Economics II (Macro); 1101 Intermediate Microeconomics, 1701 International Economics

**ENGLISH:** 2010 Interpreting Texts; 1450 Writing with Power

**HISTORY:** 2607 International Crimes; 1202 Survey of U.S. History II; 2210 US: 1941-Present; 2220 American Presidents; 2601 History of the Law

**JHI:** 3510 Writing Jewish History

PHILOSOPHY: 1101 Logic, 1600 Ethics, 2500H Law: Jewish and Western Perspectives

POLITICS: 1501 Fundamentals of Political Science; 2315 Int'l Law and Organization; 2135 Voting and Elections; 1101 Intro to American Politics; 2105 Congress and Legislature Process; 2291 Democracy and its Critics

PSYCHOLOGY: 3840 Psychology and the Law

SOCIOLOGY: 1413H Social Inequality

Students should be aware that most law schools actively discourage pre-law students from taking too many law-related courses, as they prefer that students concentrate on acquiring a broad field of general knowledge and skills as a sound foundation for legal studies.

# **PRE-LAW SUGGESTED READING LIST**

For a complete list of up-to-date articles of interest to pre-law students, please visit the website at <https://www.yu.edu/academic-advising/pre-law>.

- 24 Hours with 24 Lawyers: Profiles of Traditional and Non-Traditional Careers (Jasper Kim)
- 55 Successful Harvard Law School Application Essays: What Worked for Them Can Help You Get Into the Law School of Your Choice (Staff of the Harvard Crimson)
- A Civil Action (Jonathan Harr)
- A Matter of Interpretation (Antonin Scalia)
- *Affective Assistance of Counsel*, Marjorie Silver
- *All The Laws But One*, William Rehnquist
- An Introduction to Law & Economics (Mitchell Polinsky)
- An Introduction to Legal Reasoning (Edward Levi)
- An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law (Roscoe Pound)
- *Baron's Guide To Law Schools 2009*
- *Best 170 Law Schools* (Princeton Review)
- *Cardozo: A Study In Reputation*, Richard A. Posner
- *Damages*, Barry Werth
- First: Sandra Day O'Connor, Evan Thomas
- Getting To Maybe: How to Excel on Law School Exams (Richard Michael Fischl and Jeremy Paul)
- Gideon's Trumpet (Anthony Lewis)
- *Gideon's Trumpet*, Anthony Lewis
- *How To Get Into Law School (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*
- *How To Get Into The Top Law Schools* (3rd Edition), Richard Montauk JD
- *How To Succeed In Law School* (3rd Edition)
- Jane Sherron de Hart
- *John Marshall: Definer Of A Nation*, Jean Edward Smith
- Law 101 (Jay M. Feinman)
- *Law And Social Norms*, Eric A. Posner
- *Law School 101*, R. Stephanie Good
- Law School Confidential (Robert H. Miller)
- *Law School Confidential*, Robert H. Miller
- Law vs. Life (Walt Bachman)
- Law's Empire (Ronald Dworkin)
- *Lawyer: A Life Of Counsel And Controversy*, Arthur L. Limen
- Letters From Law School: The Life of a Second-Year Law Student (Lawrence Dieker)
- *Letters to a Young Lawyer*, Alan M. Dershowitz, Esq.
- *Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.*, G. Edward White
- One L (Scott Turow)
- *Planet Law School II*, Atticus Falcon, Esq.
- Punishment and Responsibility (H.L.A. Hart)
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Life,

- *Safe Haven in America: Battles to Open the Golden Door*, Michael Wildes, Esq.
- *Should You Really Be a Lawyer* (Deobrah Schneider)
- *Should You Really Be A Lawyer—A Guide To Smart Career Choices Before, During And After Law School*, Deborah Schneider and Gary Belsky
- *Simple Rules for a Complicated World* (Richard Epstein)
- *So You Want To Be A Lawyer*, Law School Admission Council
- *Starting Off Right In Law School*, Carolyn Nygren and Susan Estrich
- *The Best Law Schools' Admissions Secrets: The Essential Guide from Harvard's Former Admissions Dean* (Joyce Curl)
- *The Bramble Bush: Our Law and Its Study* (Karl Llewellyn)
- *The Federalist Papers*
- *The Fraternity: Lawyers And Judges In Collusion*, John F. Molloy
- *The Ivey Guide To Law School Admissions*, Anna Ivey
- *The Ivey Guide to Law School Admissions: Straight Advice on Essays, Resumes, Interviews, and More* (Anna Ivey)
- *The Law School Labyrinth: A Guide to Making the Most of Your Legal Education* (Steven Sedberry)
- *The Lawyer Myth: A Defense of the American Legal Profession* (Rennard Strickland and Frank T. Read)
- *The Lost Lawyer*, Anthony T. Kronman
- *The Love (Lure) Of The Law: Why People Become Lawyers And What The Profession Does To Them*, Richard Moll
- *The Lure of the Law: Why People Become Lawyers, and What the Profession Does to Them* (Richard Moll)
- *The Majesty Of The Law*, Sandra Day O'connor
- *The Most Democratic Branch: How The Courts Serve America*, Jeffrey Rosen
- *The Nature of the Judicial Process* (Benjamin Nathan Cardozo)
- *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court* (Jeffrey Toobin)
- *The Official Guide to Legal Specialties: An Insider's Guide to Every Major Practice Area* (Lisa Abrams)
- *The Origin Of Adversary Criminal Trial*, John H. Langbein
- *The Path of Law* (Oliver Wendell Holmes)
- *The Politics Of Law: A Progressive Critique*, David Kairys (Editor)
- *The Rule Of Lawyers: How The New Litigation Elite Threatens America's Rule Of Law*, Walter K. Olson
- *The Supreme Court*, William Rehnquist
- *The Tempting of America* (Robert Bork)
- *The United States Supreme Court: The Pursuit Of Justice*, Christopher Tomlins (Editor)
- *The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide To The Constitution*, Linda R. Monk
- *To Be a Trial Lawyer* (F. Lee Bailey)
- *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (Richard Susskin)

# **THE APPLICATION PROCESS—FAQ'S**

What factors are most important for admission to law school?

## *GPA and LSAT*

Two primary factors for admission to law school are your grade point average (GPA) and your Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) score. Law schools vary in the weight they accord to each, but some schools give the LSAT significantly more weight. Thus, it is important both to keep your grades up and to prepare thoroughly for the LSAT. Most schools will take account of trends in your undergraduate performance; if you had a bad first year and then improved your grades, it will be noted.

What else will the admissions committee consider?

*Personal statement.* Your personal statement gives you the chance to set yourself apart from other applicants. What are your accomplishments? What unique experiences have you had? What difficulties have you overcome? Use the personal statement to show the Admissions Committee what is special about you. Make certain that you show the personal statement to your pre-law adviser.

*Letters of recommendation.* Many law schools require two or more letters of recommendation. These letters should be from professors or employers who know you well enough to comment on your abilities, work habits, and character. Vague letters from people who do not know you well are not helpful.

*Work experience.* Law schools are interested in work experience that shows motivation and a capacity to succeed in a nonacademic environment. Especially if you are waiting several years after graduation to apply to law school, as many students do, this work experience will be considered.

*Personal and academic integrity.* Law school applications require you to report any violations of Yeshiva University's social and academic integrity codes as well as any criminal convictions. Some schools will require a Dean's certification in which the Dean indicates whether the student has any violations on his record.

## **What is the Law School Admissions Council ("LSAC")?**

The Law School Admissions Council streamlines the process for applying to law school. The LSAC website is located at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org). Students can use this site to:

- ✓ Register for the LSAT
- ✓ Purchase study materials
- ✓ Sign up for Credentials Assembly Service (CAS)
- ✓ Research schools

- ✓ Complete online applications
- ✓ Utilize the letters of recommendation and evaluation service

### **What is the Credential Assembly Service (“CAS”)?**

The CAS compiles and summarizes information about each applicant. This summary is called a law school report and is sent to each school the applicant applies to. The law school report includes the applicant’s LSAT scores, writing samples, undergraduate and graduate grades as well as some biographical information. CAS also offers a letter of recommendation and evaluation service. Most American Bar Association (“ABA”) approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to CAS.

Applicants can sign up for CAS on the LSAC website located at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org). There is a onetime fee of \$155. The CAS account is active for 5 years from the date it is set up. Fee waivers may be granted in cases of extreme need.

In order for CAS to compile a law school report applicants must:

- ✓ Create an LSAC Account
- ✓ Make sure they have a reportable LSAT Score
- ✓ Provide information about the schools they have attended to LSAC
- ✓ Print and sign a transcript request form and formally request a transcript from the registrar of each and every post-secondary university they have attended. The transcript will then be sent directly to LSAC.

Applicants can sign up for CAS at the same time they register for the LSAT but are not required to do both simultaneously. However, applicants should pay the CAS fee and complete the above steps at least 4-6 weeks before their first law school application deadline.

# **LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE**

## **FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEAR**

- ✓ Choose a major that you find enjoyable, academically rigorous, and challenging.
- ✓ Attend pre-law events with law school admissions officers and practicing attorneys.
- ✓ Investigate other options to ensure that law school is the right choice for you.
- ✓ Research law related internships.
- ✓ Visit the pre-law adviser at least once per semester.

## **SPRING OF JUNIOR YEAR**

- ✓ Review all transcripts carefully to ensure that all information is current and accurate.
- ✓ Request transcripts from all post-secondary schools you have attended (even if it was just a 1-credit class or a summer course.) A transcript request form can be downloaded from lsac.org. [Make sure your Israeli transcripts are accurate and have been received here at YU!]
- ✓ Register for the June LSAT (this will allow you an opportunity to retake the exam in October if your score needs improvement).
- ✓ Prepare for the LSAT.
- ✓ Sign up for CAS (credential assembly system) which will collect your transcripts and summarize them into a report that will be sent to law schools once they receive your application. Your LSAT score and letters of recommendation will also be sent through this service.

## **SUMMER OF JUNIOR YEAR**

- ✓ Take the June LSAT.
- ✓ Start drafting your personal statement.
- ✓ Think about whom you will ask for letters of recommendation.
- ✓ Make a list of schools you are thinking of applying to.
- ✓ Register for the October LSAT if you are not satisfied with your June score.

## **EARLY FALL OF SENIOR YEAR**

- ✓ Visit as many schools as you can.
- ✓ Decide which schools to apply to.
- ✓ Begin your applications. They can be completed on the LSAC website.
- ✓ Line up your recommenders. Give them your personal statement, resume and possibly a paper you wrote for their class in order to enable them to write an outstanding recommendation. Follow the LSAC instructions for submitting letters. <https://www.lsat.org/llm-and-non-jd-applicants/llm-non-jd-application-process/application-requirements/letters> Ask for evaluations if a school requires

one or if you feel it would be helpful. To obtain an evaluation provide your evaluator's contact information to LSAC. LSAC will then contact your evaluator via email to request the evaluation.

- ✓ Revise your personal statement and meet with a Writing Center tutor to ensure that it is responsive to the specific question asked and is as polished as possible. Let Dr. Sugarman review your final product for comment/corrections/more rewrites.
- ✓ Prepare your resume. We strongly recommend that you make an appointment with YU's Career Center to review this.
- ✓ Draft an addendum if you feel it is necessary. (The decision to include an addendum should be discussed with your pre-law adviser.)

### **MID-LATE FALL OF SENIOR YEAR**

- ✓ Finalize your personal statement.
- ✓ Review your applications and add finishing touches.
- ✓ Make sure your recommenders have submitted letters of recommendation and that CAS has received them. Assign recommendations to the schools you plan to apply to.
- ✓ Obtain Dean's Certifications for the schools that request these. (They should be sent directly to the requesting school.)
- ✓ Complete personal certification if required.
- ✓ Answer supplemental questions if given the opportunity to do so.
- ✓ Submit application fee or waiver.
- ✓ Send out your applications.
- ✓ Request financial aid application materials from the schools and make sure you read the instructions carefully.
- ✓ Take the November LSAT if necessary. REMEMBER: Scores are averaged so take the exam when you are ready!

### **WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER OF SENIOR YEAR**

- ✓ Concentrate on your final exams. The admissions committee may evaluate these scores before making a final decision.
- ✓ Wait for the acceptances to roll in. (If you are lucky you may hear by January. You will most likely have heard by April but if you are placed on a waitlist you may not receive a final decision until August.)
- ✓ Send updated transcripts to CAS.
- ✓ Complete all applications for financial aid.
- ✓ Review financial aid notices from the law schools and project your resources and costs.
- ✓ Decide which law school offer to accept.

- ✓ Send in acceptances of admission offers and your seatdeposit.
- ✓ Complete your student loan applications.
- ✓ Let the Pre-Law office know of acceptances and scholarshipoffers.

# **THE LSAT**

## **Preparing for the Law School Admissions Test**

The Law School Admissions Test (the “LSAT”) is a challenging examination of fundamental intellectual skills, not of any specific areas of knowledge. Some students find LSAT preparation courses helpful. Other applicants prepare alone by purchasing LSAT prep books from LSAC.org. Regardless of whether you choose to take a course, the key to the exam is practice, practice, practice under simulated test conditions. Students should plan to take the exam only once they are optimally prepared. Taking an LSAT as a “practice run” is not advisable and may hurt a student’s chances of admission.

The LSAT is offered seven times during the year: January, April, June, July, October, and November. Ideally, students should take the exam in June of the year before they plan to attend law school (the end of junior year). This gives students a chance to take the October exam, if necessary, and still complete their applications by early to mid-November. As an added benefit, the June exam is not given on Shabbat, meaning that students will receive an itemized score report, allowing them to gain insight into the types of questions they have difficulty with. All other exams are given on Shabbat and an alternate test date is arranged for Sabbath observers. These exams are non-disclosed, meaning that students receive their scores for the exam without additional detail. However, some students find the October test desirable as it gives them a full summer off to concentrate on the exam.

The test covers four areas. Suggestions for developing strengths in each area are listed below.

### **Reading Comprehension**

This section tests one’s ability to understand, analyze, and interpret a brief but dense piece of writing and to answer questions about its content and perspective. To prepare, one should take courses that involve extensive reading and critical analysis of complete texts. Advanced courses in literature, history, politics or philosophy provide this type of training.

### **Analytical Reasoning**

Also called Logic Games, this section presents problems involving the grouping, ordering, and spatial relationships of objects. It tests the ability to think precisely and methodically and to solve problems with order and logic. Preparation can include courses in mathematics, natural sciences, and computer science and well as in philosophy (logic).

## Logical Thinking

This section asks students questions about a short written argument—its main points, assumptions, inferences, errors in argumentation, its applicability to a new context, and whether a new piece of evidence would support or weaken the argument. Courses that provide practice in analytical arguments and theories are offered by political scientists, philosophers, historians, and economists.

## Writing

From <https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/about-lsat-writing>

Looks like a new format.

LSAT Writing is a proctored, on-demand writing exam that is administered online using secure proctoring software that is installed on the candidate's own computer.

LSAC developed LSAT Writing in response to feedback from test takers. The new approach has shortened the LSAT test day and provides more flexibility for candidates taking the exam. Using LSAT Writing, candidates can now complete the writing sample portion of the test at a convenient time and place of their choosing. We will now open LSAT Writing eight (8) days prior to every test administration. Candidates must have a complete writing sample in their file in order to see their score or have their score released to schools.

LSAT Writing uses the same decision-prompt structure that schools and candidates are already familiar with from previous LSAT administrations. This structure is specifically designed to elicit the kind of argumentative writing that candidates will be expected to produce in law school. Candidates will still be given 35 minutes to write an essay in response to the prompt that is presented to them.

# **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION/ EVALUATIONS**

*How many recommendation letters should I aim for?*

Students should aim to get a total of 2-3 letters of recommendation and/or evaluations. This is a case where more is not better.

*Whom should I ask for letters of recommendation and/ or evaluations?*

Applicants may ask professors, supervisors, employers, community leaders, or other mentors for letters of recommendation. In general, unless the applicant has been out of school for an extended period of time, at least one letter should be from a professor. Asking a public official who does not know your work well or your capability for academic success is generally not a good idea.

*Can I read my recommendation letters?*

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, students applying to law schools in the United States have the right to review letters of recommendation which are written for them. However, students would be well-advised to waive this right because law schools have indicated that these letters are more candid and therefore more effective.

*What is the difference between letters of recommendation and evaluations?*

The evaluation service was recently introduced as a way for recommenders to more objectively and quantifiably assess the abilities of applicants. Once a student adds an evaluator to his list, the evaluator is contacted by LSAC and asked to electronically rate the applicant on a number of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that have been identified as necessary for success in law school. Space is also provided for evaluators to submit some comments about each applicant. Applicants are free to use both evaluations and recommendations or one and not the other. However, careful attention should be given to the requirements of each school. There are some schools which require evaluations only and vice versa.

*Is there an advantage to using evaluations over letters of recommendation?*

In general, no. It is a matter of personal preference on the part of the recommender/evaluator and on the part of the applicant. However, if a school prefers or requires evaluations, care must be taken to comply with this preference.

*Are recommendations automatically sent to each school I apply to?*

No, the CAS service will show applicants which letters have been received and processed. After this time, applicants must assign letters or evaluations to the schools they apply to. **PAY ATTENTION TO THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY EACH SCHOOL!**

*What materials should I give to my recommenders?*

Students should try to schedule in person meeting with each recommender and provide them with their transcript, resume, a paper they wrote for the class (if applicable) and their personal statement.

*What are the qualities that should be highlighted in letters of recommendation?*

- ✓ The letter should make it clear that the recommender knows you well;
- ✓ That they've known you long enough to write with authority;
- ✓ That they are confident that they know the caliber of your work;
- ✓ They can describe your work positively;
- ✓ They have a high opinion of you;
- ✓ They know your educational and career goals;
- ✓ They should be able to favorably compare you with your peers;
- ✓ Letters should be on letterhead, signed, and dated

# **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

This is a very difficult and personal piece of writing. Please know that you are not alone in this process. YU offers many resources to help ensure that your personal statement is as strong as it possibly can be. Students should review their draft statements with the YU Pre-Law Advising Offices, the Career Center, or the Writing Center. Prepare to devote a lot of time to this section. **DO NOT LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE.**

Law School personal statement prompts are often vague and do not provide a lot of direction. Many schools simply ask applicants to write provide a two page statement (double-spaced) about themselves to enable the admissions committee to better evaluate the applicant. In general law schools will leave the content of the statement to each applicant's discretion.

Try not to be overwhelmed by this task. This is your chance to shine and to show the law school that you will be a vital member of the incoming class. Personal statements are one of the most common ways to make up for a borderline LSAT score. An excellent personal statement will make an admissions officer feel an emotional connection to you and often will provoke him/her to fight for your candidacy when the time comes. You don't want to miss out on this opportunity.

So what do you write about? First determine which qualities you want to highlight. Is it your intellectual abilities? Your leadership skills? Your capacity to endure adversity? Your ability to stay calm under pressure? Your strong values? The next step is to think about a way to showcase these qualities without sounding arrogant or contrived. As the adage goes, "show, don't tell." Let the admissions committee reach your desired conclusion on its own. In other words, guide your audience but do not lecture.

Each personal statement is unique and should be discussed on a one-on-one basis, but here are some pointers to get you started:

## **DO**

- ✓ Start early
- ✓ Discuss your topic with the Pre-Law Adviser before you invest a lot of time in writing it
- ✓ Hook your reader in the first paragraph
- ✓ Revise, revise, revise
- ✓ Write sincerely
- ✓ Remember your audience
- ✓ Make your personal statement unique to you
- ✓ Incorporate specifics and details
- ✓ Write clearly and grammatically
- ✓ Make sure it flows
- ✓

- ✓ Use all available resources (Writing Center, Office of Pre-Law Advising, and the CareerCenter.)

## **DON'T**

- ✓ Exceed the page or word limit
- ✓ Write about writing your personal statement
- ✓ Focus on the negative
- ✓ Write the name of the wrong school
- ✓ Write about why you want to go to law school if you don't have a clear reason for doing so.
- ✓ Use clichés

Still not sure what to write about? It might be helpful to try a free-write on each of these prompts. Set a timer for 30 minutes and write whatever comes to mind without worrying about grammar or word usage.

### Personal Statement Prompts:

- ✓ What do you remember most from your childhood?
- ✓ What was the best/ worst piece of advice you've ever received? Did you follow it?
- ✓ Has someone influenced your life in a meaningful way? Describe your reaction to this person and how you changed? (Make sure you are writing about yourself and not your mentor)
- ✓ Describe a mistake you made and how you have matured because of it. (Be careful with this one. You want to make sure you are painting yourself in a positive light.)
- ✓ What would you do if you were not afraid of failure?
- ✓ Has an event in your life caused you to reevaluate an idea you've always thought to be true?
- ✓ What do you wish your childhood/young adulthood could have looked like?
- ✓ What difficult situations have you overcome?
- ✓ What are you passionate about? Why?
- ✓ How would your friends describe you as a person if they knew you were not listening?
- ✓ What is your strongest personal trait?
- ✓ What are the lessons you have learned?
- ✓ What values are important to you? Why?
- ✓ Did you ever have to make a difficult decision? Why was it so difficult? Are you happy with your choice?
- ✓ Do you look at problems/ issues differently than other people?
- ✓ Does someone look up to you? What have you done for them? How has this impacted you?
- ✓ What is your greatest accomplishment to date? What do you wish it could be?

# **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE**

Law schools will also consider an applicant's involvement on campus or in his/her community. Pre-law students are therefore strongly encouraged to volunteer, to participate in pre-law activities, and to complete internships. There are so many ways to get involved at YU. You can start by reading about the opportunities below and then be sure to follow up with the Pre-Law Adviser.

## **Internships**

Practical legal experience is an excellent way of determining if a career in the law is right for you. Internship opportunities are available through the Yeshiva University Pre-Law Judicial Internship Program, at District Attorneys' offices, the Innocence Project, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Securities and Exchange Commission and many other governmental agencies and law firms. The Career Center should also be considered as a source for legal internships.

## **Langfan Family Constitutional Oratory Competition**

The Langfan Constitutional Oratory Competition is an annual public speaking competition held each spring open to undergraduates on each campus regardless of major. The topic for the competition is generally a provocative and contemporary public issue which is conducive to public debate. Students are asked to deliver a five minute presentation arguing for or against a resolution before a panel of three judges. After the presentations, each student receives individualized critiques from the judges. Cash prizes are awarded to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place regardless of campus affiliation. If you are unsure about your interest in the law this competition is a great way to find out.

## **Yeshiva University's Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society**

YU has vibrant student-run Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society on each campus. These student leaders work with the Pre-Law advisors to organize visits with law school admissions officers, pre-law speakers, panelists and law-related field trips. Interested students should contact their advisor at their campus for more information. [The](#) contacts for the Jacob Hecht Society are:

Wilf Campus: Daniel Melool [dmelool@mail.Yu.edu](mailto:dmelool@mail.Yu.edu)

Beren Campus: Eliana Wagner [Elianaw475@gmail.com](mailto:Elianaw475@gmail.com)

## **Yeshiva University Pre-Law Judicial Internship Program**

This unpaid internship program provides Pre-Law students with the opportunity to observe and actively participate in the judicial process on a weekly basis during the academic year. Students have the opportunity to work alongside our participating judges in various courts throughout the New York State Unified Court System.

If you are interested in learning more information about this new initiative, please feel free to contact Mrs. Wood-Hill at YC or Ms. Julius at Stern.

# **SELECTING A LAW SCHOOL**

Deciding where to apply can be difficult as there are over 200 accredited law schools in the U.S. It is important to bear in mind that rankings are only one factor in selecting a law school. Keep in mind that the institution that best meets your needs may be very different from the best school for your classmates.

Some of the criteria which a student should consider in selecting a law school are:

## **Location:**

Do you have strong ties to a particular geographic location? Do you prefer city life to a more rural setting? Is there a specific geographic area where you would like to practice?

## **Size:**

Do you think you will have a better experience in a smaller class where the faculty to student ratio will likely be higher or do you welcome the advantages provided by a larger student body (i.e. more course offerings, a greater number of faculty members, and more students to interact with)?

## **Character of the Law School:**

Law schools are made up of people—students, professors and administrators—therefore, each school has its own unique character. Some student bodies are more competitive while others are more collegial and supportive. The best way to figure out the character of a law school is to speak with alumni who have or are attending the law school or to arrange for a visit to the school.

## **State/ Regional/ National Schools:**

Is the law school characterized as a national, state, or regional law school? Do students at the law school typically practice in state, in the region or do they have the mobility to practice in a variety of states across the nation? Students should look at the school's placement statistics, NALP and <https://www.lawschooltransparency.com/> for the answers to these questions.

## **Faculty:**

Students should research the number and caliber of full-time faculty members. They should also look at the number of part-time faculty, and the administrative staff of the law school. Faculty to student ratio, class sizes, and the approachability of faculty members are also important factors to consider.

## **Employment Rate/ Career Services:**

Does the school have a strong and supportive career services office? How successful has the school been in terms of placing students each year? What areas are these students working in and in which geographic areas? What assistance is given to students who are not

interested in working in law firms? This information can be obtained from NALP and/or from <https://www.lawschooltransparency.com/>

Those students interested in working for a law firm should look into which firms participate in the school's On Campus Interview ("OCI") process and how deep into the class (i.e, top 10%, 20%, 50%...) each firm will go.

**Journals:**

Does the school have journals in the areas you are interested in? How frequently are these journals cited in published opinion?

**Joint Programs:**

Does the school offer joint program in an area you are interested in?

**Area of Interest:**

Do you have a specific area of interest? If so look for schools that have a journal, a clinic and a full-time faculty member in that area. Some schools will claim to offer a specialty but in reality, only have 1-2 classes in that area.

**Academia/Clerkships**

Do you have a desire to go into academia or to clerk? Certain schools have much stronger placement rates for these positions.

**Alumni Network:**

Does the law school have a strong alumni network committed to assisting future graduates?

**Bar Passage Rate:**

How many students pass the bar on their first try each year?

**Cost/ Scholarship Offers:**

What is the annual tuition per year? What are the additional living expenses for each school? If merit scholarships are not offered, what loan reimbursement plans are available?

## **HELPFUL WEBSITES**

YU Pre-Law Advising Website: <https://www.yu.edu/academic-advising/pre-law>

The Law School Admissions Council: <http://www.lsac.org/>

NALP Pre-Law Portal: [http://www.nalp.org/prelaw\\_portal](http://www.nalp.org/prelaw_portal)

Law School Transparency: <http://www.lawschooltransparency.com/>

American Bar Association: <http://www.americanbar.org/aba.html>

National Jurist (Pre-Law): <http://www.nationaljurist.com/prelaw-home>

FinAid sponsored by the National Association of Student Financial Administrators:

<http://www.finaid.org/>

LexisNexis: <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/> (accessible from YU computers)

Find Law: <http://www.findlaw.com/>