

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**

The LSAT requires test takers to write a short nonfiction essay in response to a given topic. This section measures students' ability to write clearly and coherently while under time pressure and without any grammatical or spelling aids. Students can prepare for this portion of the test by taking courses that require substantial writing. Especially helpful are classes that require research papers.

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