

- A Juris Doctor (J.D.) leads to a broad range of careers that can impact people’s lives in positive ways.
- Lawyers help with buying homes, writing wills, prosecuting and defending criminals, creating business contracts, and protecting people from litigation.
- All areas of our lives are touched by laws—this means that lawyers have an enormous impact in shaping our lives.
- A law degree may also open law-related careers in government, business, higher education, health care, communications, and numerous other fields.
- Legal practice is intellectually challenging and requires the use of ethics, reasoning and judgment.

Education & Licensure

- Complete a bachelor’s degree in a field of your choice.
- No “best” major for law school exists. Pick an area of study interesting to you.
- Some majors may complement your work in a particular area of law. For example, if you are a science major, you might find patent or health law interesting, and your undergraduate academic background may be very helpful.
- While undergraduate coursework in a specific field may be helpful, the JD is a general degree.
- Following 3 years of law school, you will take the Bar exam to practice in your state of choice. Some states use a national bar allowing more transferability between states for practice. In other cases, students may take the Bar in multiple states.

Preparation

- Learn all you can about the field and about other possible careers that you might find fulfilling. You could end up with a similar career, for example, with a law degree or with a master’s degree in public policy.
- Spend time observing and working with lawyers. Verify that the field matches your expectations.
- Gain leadership and teamwork experiences and actively develop your communication skills.
- The primary website to become familiar with is the [Law School Admission Council](https://www.lsac.org) <https://www.lsac.org>.
- Consider taking **GS 49000 Law School Exploration**. Taught by a pre-professional advisor each semester (Fall and Spring), this 10 week, 1-credit class enhances your preparation for law school.
- Law schools do not require prerequisite courses; however, they do like to see strengths in particular areas.

American Bar Association Recommended Skill Sets for Law School

Core Skill	What this means
Problem Solving	Seek courses and experiences that will engage your critical thinking about important issues, challenge your beliefs and improve your tolerance for uncertainty
Critical Reading	Take courses requiring close reading in literature, philosophy, history, etc
Writing and Editing	All writing intensive courses are useful to develop these skills
Oral Communication and Listening	Seek to develop this skill by participating in debate and public speaking
Research	Law school focuses intensively on finding and processing information
Public Service/Promotion of Justice	Law schools will look for evidence that you want to serve others
Relationship-Building and Collaboration	Teamwork and leadership skills are important for success in law fields

Student Organizations: Pre-Law Society, Mock Trial

Program Information Resources

- The [LSAC Evaluating Law Schools page](https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/best-law-school-you) offers several resources to help you search for schools. <https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/best-law-school-you>
- [Official Guide to ABA approved Law Schools](https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/find-law-school/jd-programs) <https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/find-law-school/jd-programs>
- [American Bar Association 509 Required Disclosures](https://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/Disclosure509.aspx) <https://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/Disclosure509.aspx>
- [Analytix by AccessLex](https://www.accesslex.org/tools-and-resources/analytix-accesslex-0) <https://www.accesslex.org/tools-and-resources/analytix-accesslex-0>
- [XploreJD by AccessLex](https://xplorejd.org/) <https://xplorejd.org/>
- Attend a [LSAC Law School Forum](https://www.lsac.org/lawschoolforums) <https://www.lsac.org/lawschoolforums>
- Create an account on [LSAC LawHub](https://www.lsac.org/lawhub) <https://www.lsac.org/lawhub> (including Law School Transparency)
- [Wilson-Stern Book of Law School Lists](https://www.bu.edu/caspreprofessional/files/2020/02/The-2019-2020-Book-of-Law-School-Lists.pdf) <https://www.bu.edu/caspreprofessional/files/2020/02/The-2019-2020-Book-of-Law-School-Lists.pdf>

Applying

- Register for the [Law School Aptitude Test \(LSAT\)](https://www.lsac.org/lsat) <https://www.lsac.org/lsat>
- Apply to schools through your account at the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) [LSAC website](https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school) <https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school>
- Take the LSAT early enough to provide yourself a second opportunity to take the test. This often means taking it in June at the end of your junior year.
- Register for the [Credential Assembly Service \(CAS\)](https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school/jd-application-process/credential-assembly-service-cas) <https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school/jd-application-process/credential-assembly-service-cas>. This will hold all your necessary documents to apply to law school: transcripts, LSAT score, letters of recommendation.
- Competitive applicants have:
 - Experiences in the legal field (courses, observation, volunteering, internships, etc)
 - Strong GPA – ideally a 3.5 or better
 - Especially strong communication skills—reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills
 - A breadth of coursework to show you have many capabilities and interests
 - Service, volunteer work, and leadership experiences
 - Strong, positive letters of recommendation
- Early application is key – apply by November of your senior year for best results (assuming 4-year graduation).

Fee Assistance

- [LSAT Fees and Fee Waivers](https://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/lsat-cas-fees) <https://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/lsat-cas-fees>
- Visit law school admissions websites to learn if fee assistance is available for application.
- [Paying for Law School](https://www.accesslex.org/tools-and-resources/paying-law-school) (AccessLex) <https://www.accesslex.org/tools-and-resources/paying-law-school> and [LSAC](https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/paying-law-school) <https://www.lsac.org/choosing-law-school/paying-law-school>

Employment Outlook

- The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/lawyers.htm) projects a 10% increase in jobs through 2031. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/legal/lawyers.htm>
- The median annual wage for lawyers was \$127,990 in 2021.
- Competition for jobs is fierce and depending on the type of practice and location, salaries can vary greatly. For example, a corporate lawyer in a private firm may earn \$180,000 or more the first year, but may also work 12 hours a day, 6-7 days a week. A public interest lawyer just out of law school may make \$45,000-60,000.
- With average law school debts of \$84,000-\$122,000 (for those who attend public law schools and private law schools, respectively), you need to think carefully about the financial investment you are making in law school and have realistic expectations of the financial returns on that investment.

Diversity Matters

The legal profession needs professionals who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality add to a richer experience for all students in the law school classroom, contribute to the legal profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for clients.

Programs in Indiana

- [Maurer School of Law](https://www.law.indiana.edu/admission/jd-apply/) Bloomington, IN <https://www.law.indiana.edu/admission/jd-apply/>
- [Robert H. McKinney School of Law](https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/admissions/jd/index.html) Indianapolis, IN <https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/admissions/jd/index.html>
- [The University of Notre Dame Law School](https://law.nd.edu/admissions/) South Bend, IN <https://law.nd.edu/admissions/>

More Information

- [Discover Law](https://www.lsac.org/discover-law) <https://www.lsac.org/discover-law>
- [American Bar Association Pre-Law Resources](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law/) https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law/
- [National Association for Law Placement](https://www.nalp.org/) (NALP) <https://www.nalp.org/> and [Prelaw Portal](https://www.nalp.org/prelaw_portal) https://www.nalp.org/prelaw_portal
- [Public Service Law Careers](https://www.psjd.org/explore-advice) by NALP <https://www.psjd.org/explore-advice>
- [AskEdna](https://www.accesslex.org/ask-edna) (from AccessLex Institute) <https://www.accesslex.org/ask-edna>
- [Aspiring Law Students](https://www.accesslex.org/aspiring-law-students) (from AccessLex) <https://www.accesslex.org/aspiring-law-students>

Other Careers to Consider

Paralegal · Public Policy · Social Work · Urban Planning · Public Administration · Patent Agent (for those in STEM fields)

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional