

PRE-LAW FAQ

1. What must I do to be Pre-Law?

To be a pre-law student simply means that you are interested in going on to law school after graduation. Unlike some other pre-professional tracks, there is no favored major or even specific courses that pre-law students must take in order to attend law school. Law schools seek to accept students from all sorts of majors, with a wide variety of backgrounds. That said, there are many things you can and need to do to maximize your chances of acceptance to law school. Seeking good pre-law advising is the first step.

2. What major should I choose?

Given there is no preferred major or required courses for law school, what major should you choose and what courses should you take?

You should take the major you are genuinely interested in! The simple fact is that students learn the most in whatever major most interests them. Excelling in your chosen field of study (indicated in the first place by GPA and recommendations from professors) is far more important than the choice of major itself. Choosing a major because it seems like a good pre-law major is counter-productive, if you do not enjoy it or do well in it. If, as is often the case, you are not sure what major interests you, then use your first couple of semesters to sample different majors – your Gened requirements are a great way to do this. A great many pre-law students switch majors at some point, so don't be afraid to do so.

It is not necessary to choose a law-related major nor take a great many law-related undergraduate courses. Law schools generally take the attitude that you will spend three years intensely studying law at law school. This will so far surpass any knowledge of the law you could acquire as an undergraduate that it is little advantage to focus on the law as an undergraduate. Indeed, most law schools prefer a broad general education in all those things that may be assumed as general background in law school, but not taught.

[Here is what the American Bar Association \(ABA\) has to say.](#)

[Here is what Harvard Law School has to say.](#)

What you do need to consider is whether you are acquiring the skills that are required for the study and practice of law. The ABA identifies the following skills: analytic /problem solving skills, critical reading skills, writing skills, oral communication/listening abilities, general research skills, task organization/management skills, public service and promotion of justice. Some or all of these skills can be acquired in a wide range of college courses. However, as a rule of thumb, courses presenting challenging and complex problems, as well as substantial reading and writing loads, are a good bet. Pre-law advisors can help direct you to such courses.

3. What must I do to apply to law school? What are the criteria for acceptance at law schools?

There are four basic elements of a law school application.

- LSAT score: [find out more about the LSAT at LSAC.org.](#)
- Undergraduate GPA

- Recommendations: most law schools expect at least two recommendations, at least one of which is an academic recommendation (i.e., from a college-level instructor who has taught you for at least one course). The other can be academic or professional (from someone you have worked for).
- Personal Statement. The personal statement is a two-page essay in which you try to present a more holistic picture of who you are and what motivates you to be a lawyer. Since it is, by definition, personal, everyone will have a different approach and content. Again, pre-law advisors can help guide you with this.

Other factors:

- Employment, extra-curriculars, etc. Most students submit a resume listing employment, internships, extra-curricular activities (inside or outside college).
- Some law schools have additional or slightly different requirements, so it is important to research the application requirements for each law school to which you are applying.
- While LSAT and GPA figure are key factors in law school admission, there are great many other factors that may influence admission. It is a good idea to consult with a pre-law advisor to make sure you are presenting the law school with all relevant factors.

4. When should I apply to law school?

You should apply to law school the fall before you are planning to start at law school. If you are planning to start law school the fall after graduation, then you would apply in the fall of your senior year. However, it should be noted that a great many applicants are one to two years out when applying and there is no advantage to applying as a college senior. Nationally, only about one-third of applicants accepted to law school applied in their senior year. That means two-thirds applied after graduation, and even indicates some preference among law school for post-graduation experience.

5. The Pre-Law Listserv.

The Pre-Law Listserv is the primary way Temple stays in touch with its pre-law students and circulates all sorts of information and news relating to pre-law. To join, subscribe here using your Temple email: <https://listserv.temple.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=CLA-LAW>

Pre-law Organizations:

Black Law Students Association

Pre-Law Society

Phi Alpha Delta

Temple's AMTA Mock Trial Team