

About the LSAT

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The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is one of the inevitable steps that will take-up a great deal of your time during your law school application process. The LSAT is basically a standardized test developed by the Law School Admissions Service. The test is supposed to be designed to indicate a potential candidate's ability to succeed in her/his first year of law school. Though most previous LSAT examinees may strongly disagree, it is a necessary step in the law school admissions process and should be taken seriously because the test does impact your overall desirability to potential law schools.

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The LSAT is generally offered four times per academic year: June, October, December and February. The June administration of the LSAT generally occurs on a Monday afternoon, the other dates generally fall on a Saturday morning. For those who observe the Saturday Sabbath, alternative test dates are available. Testing centers will also accommodate examinees with handicaps or those who need special equipment or consideration, but these special arrangements do need to be made in advance.

The LSAT consists of four scored 35-minute sections involving essentially three different question types: logical reasoning, analytical reasoning, and reading comprehension. The exam includes an un-scored experimental section that lasts about 35-minutes and a 35-minute writing sample section. The examinee is not informed as to which section is the experimental section, and an examinee is advised not to guess. All sections should be treated with equal importance. The scoring scale ranges from 120 points at the low end, and 180 points at the high end. Exactly how test scores are calculated will be explained during your course review.

Timing, with respect to when a law school candidate should take the LSAT, is just as important as anything. Law school candidates in their senior year of college or university should plan on taking the LSAT in June following a candidate's junior semester in order to be admitted to the first fall classes after the candidate's graduation. The date is desirable for a couple of different reasons. Unless you enroll in summer courses, the semester for the candidate is over, and the tension between preparing for class and the LSAT at the same time is eliminated. The candidate has approximately a one-month window between the end of the semester and the administration of the LSAT. Generally, LSAT scores will be released by the end of July. This way a candidate may begin the law school selection process equipped with the test score information, or have sufficient time to cancel the score, and prepare to re-take the test if necessary.

The above is offered as a suggestion and a potential strategy. Some people may prefer test taking during the school year because a candidate may feel more focused on studies. Each individual needs to take into account their schedule and their particular set of circumstances when preparing for the LSAT. There is no formula to success other than to study hard and take plenty of practice examinations prior to the exam.

The Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) reports any earned LSAT scores over the previous five years in which the law school candidate took the LSAT. If more than one LSAT is taken over the previous five years, an average is derived by the LSDAS when reported to a candidate's selected law schools. Copies of writing samples are also included in the reports to the law schools. Many schools will not accept an LSAT score that is more than three years old, prior to the candidate's application to her/his selected law school.

As is the case with any test, especially one that may significantly impact your acceptance to a desired school, preparation is an absolute necessity barring the cavalier genius that appears on the scene from time-to-time. It is definitely a good idea to be prepared enough so that you only have to take the exam once. Obviously, some may have to take the test more than once, but remember, this is not the end of the world and should not thwart your decision to attend law school. There are a number of ways to prepare for the LSAT. Libraries of LSAT preparation books are available at most every book store. Preparation courses are offered all over the country by various groups that specialize in test preparation. In short, there is plenty of help out there, some for free, others for a fee. Once you get into the process you will have no problem finding help to prepare you for LSAT.

However, do not make the mistake of taking the test cold. Do not take the test if you feel unprepared, or are distracted by personal problems or a temporary medical condition. You can generally get a partial refund even if you cancel your test date near the actual testing date. Take the test when you feel ready, but know the difference between not being prepared and just suffering from a minor case of cold feet. You do not want to delay the process for so-long that you are rushed to complete it.

Generally, registration for the LSAT is required at least one month prior to taking the test. You may want to apply earlier to make sure a seat is reserved for you at your first location of choice. If you require special accommodations or arrangements you may be required to apply a bit earlier depending on the testing center. Late registrants are only permitted if space is available. The test administration dates are generally listed in the LSDAS/LSAT registration book, forms for registration are also included in the book. Again, you may consider reserving a test date early enough in advance to ensure you have a reserved seat at your selected test site.

Fees for the LSAT are also listed in the LSDAS/LSAT registration book. Fee waivers are available in certain cases of need, but must to be applied for well in advance. If a waiver is granted, a candidate will receive a fee waiver that covers one LSAT administration, one LSDAS report (which includes three letters of recommendation and three reports), and one triple-prep plus book.

Fee waivers are granted only for needy candidates and this goes beyond routine financial assistance. It is recommended that only individuals with a true need apply for the fee waivers. Whether the fee waiver is granted by a particular law school or from Law Services, the fee waiver application form and supporting documentation must be submitted to Law Services with the registration order form or publication form, and a check, money order, or credit card number must be included for additional services not covered by the fee waiver. Deadlines for the submission of fee waivers are also included in the LSDAS/LSAT book.