

LSAT scores and the numbers game

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Resources for the Law School Applicant

LSAT discussion forum Â

See how competitive your LSAT and
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You Received Your LSAT Results. Now What?

You signed up for an LSAT prep course, paid the tuition, studied hard, took the LSAT, and received your LSAT score.Â Is your score good enough to get into the law school of your choice?Â What law schools do you have a solid chance of gaining admission?Â To see how competitive you are at different law schools, check out Legalnutâ€™s law school search tool.

How do law schools use your LSAT score?

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Index Score. Generally, law school admissions professionals create a numerical formula which combines your LSAT and GPA scores into one "index formula" or "index score."

From there the law schools may also calculate their separate 25th and 75th percentile for LSAT scores and GPAs. Presumably, this means that if your index score falls within the law school's 75th percentile requirement, you would have a very good chance of gaining admission. However, if your index score for either your LSAT or your GPA falls within the law school's 25th percentile, you are likely to be denied admission.

Law schools are free to establish their own formulas to rate applicants. The index score for a particular law school may weigh on an applicant's LSAT score and GPA. If the LSAT score and GPA are weighted equally, one point of LSAT score would equal one-tenth (.1) of your GPA. Once the index score is calculated, the admissions professionals can then try to rate all applicants on their index score or separately consider an applicant's percentile ranking for the LSAT score and GPA. This is a way to create a level playing field for all law school applicants. In reality, though, it's impossible to create a level playing field for law school applicants: each applicant has different life, work and educational experiences.

Retaking the LSAT

If you are unhappy with your LSAT score should you retake the LSAT? In some situations it may be necessary to retake the LSAT, such as getting a low score because you mis-grid your answer sheet, or you canceled your LSAT score prior to grading. Please note, if you retake the LSAT without canceling your score within the cancellation period, then your LSAT scores will be "averaged" by the law schools, then weighted with your GPA to arrive at your adjusted index score.

Advanced Degrees are not Considered. Law schools generally do not factor into your index score your advanced studies, such as an MBA. The reason is that not all applicants had a chance to obtain an MBA because they were applying to law school immediately prior to graduating from their undergraduate program. Hence, factoring in graduate degree grades would distort the level playing field created by the index score. In addition, law schools may choose to use grades from all undergraduate courses or only the grades related to a particular degree program. For example, an applicant may change his undergraduate major from nursing to engineering. In such a situation, the nursing grades might be ignored because they were not part of the degree program.

Where do you stand?

High LSAT Score and a High GPA: If your LSAT score and GPA rank above the 75th percentile admissions numbers, you have a great chance of getting accepted. In such a situation, the law school admissions professionals may only briefly review your writing sample, assuming they look at it at all.

Average LSAT Score and an Average GPA: If your LSAT score and GPA rank between the 25th percentile and 75th percentile, then it's likely that the law school admissions professionals will take a closer look into your application to determine what sets you apart from other applicants.

For example, the law school admissions committee will look at your writing sample, extra curricular activities, volunteer work, affiliations, legacy contributions to the school, etc.

If your score is just average, then your writing sample will carry more weight. It's essential to have good writing skills prior to entering law school. Making your personal statement into an expanded resume will not suffice. Your personal statement should concentrate on good writing. For more information, check out Legalnut's pages on how to write a law school personal statement and to improve your writing skills.

Know the facts

Law school admission is becoming more competitive. According to a recent survey of law school admissions professionals, there has been a decline in the number of law student applicants, while the law school professionals have noticed that the applicant pool's index scores are increasing. So, there are fewer law school applicants, but the applicants now have higher LSAT and GPAs. This is probably attributable to the increased use of LSAT test preparation courses such as the Princeton Review.

Fact. In year 2005, Yale Law School received about 3,778 applicants and admitted only 6% of them, or 226 students. Yale listed their low LSAT score as 168 and low GPA of 3.79. So, out of 3,778 applicants, 3,551 were rejected.

Apply Early

The earlier you apply to a law school the less time you will have to wait for an admit/deny response. Usually, if you apply before December 1st, you will only have to wait about four weeks for an answer. If your index score is average, and you apply late, it's likely that the law school has already filled their first year seats with higher index scoring applicants.

Law School Resources

Law school admissions (its all about the numbers)

About the LSAT

Minority Brochure from LSDAS

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