

UW PRE-LAW GUIDE



Pre-Law at UW

At the UW Career and Internship Center, Pre-Law Career Coaching can help students and alumni:

- Determine whether law school is the best fit for one's professional goals
- Learn about law school and the different areas of legal practice
- Help with the application process
- Determine an action plan
- Explore the different jobs and careers in the field

30 min appointments are available for UW students and alumni.
Schedule your Pre-Law Career Coaching appointment in [Handshake](#)

Exploring the Legal Profession

- Study (majors, minors) what interests you (Law school requires no prerequisite courses nor do law schools prefer any particular majors)
- Take courses that involve a lot of reading, writing, research, and critical thinking
- Take a class taught by the UW Law School for undergraduates
- Sit in on a JD level UW Law School class
- Consider what legal field(s) you want to study and take some classes in those disciplines
- Attend or join a club/RSO on campus (UW Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, UW Mock Trial)
- Get legal experience through jobs, internships, or volunteering
- Ask yourself: "Why do you want to go to law school?" and "Will obtaining a law degree be of enough value in helping me achieve my goals to justify the time (3 Years) and expense (\$100K+ tuition/debt)?"
- Maintain a high GPA
- Attend information sessions, events, and workshops
- Consider taking gap year(s)/time off gaining experience instead of going directly into law school

LSAT Prep & Application Timeline



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Applying to Law School

- Research and determine Law Schools you want to apply to
 - Realistic, Safety, & Stretch schools
- Sign up and take the LSAT
 - Consider taking a LSAT prep course, self studying, or finding a study buddy
 - Take practice exams
- Register for the Credential Assembly Services (CAS) on LSAC
- Submit transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you have attended
- Ask for letters of recommendations
 - Ask early to give your writers ample time to write
- Finalize your resume
- Write your personal statement and addenda if needed
 - Make sure to proof read and revise
- Apply for Financial Aid

Additional Resources for Pre-Law Students

You can find more information on our website:

<https://careers.uw.edu/pre-law/>

For additional resources on pre-law:

<https://careers.uw.edu/additional-resources-for-pre-law-students/>

To check when Pre-Law workshops & events are being offered:

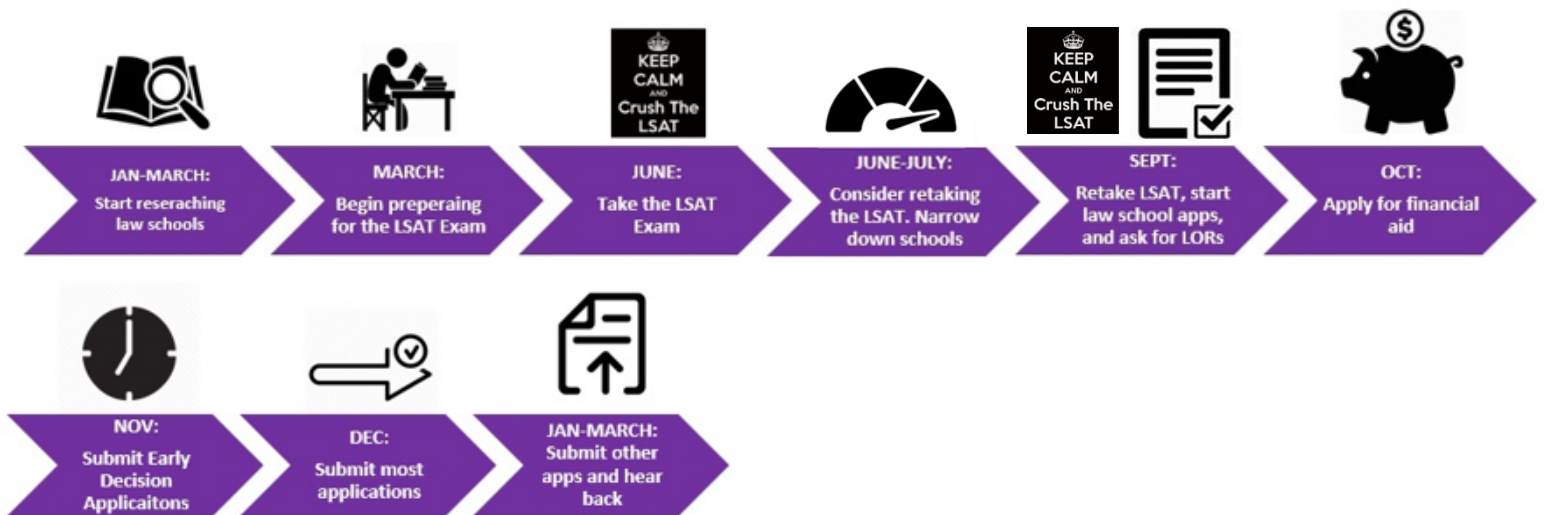
<https://careers.uw.edu/events/student/>



Applying to Law School Timeline

Here are some recommended timelines and factors to consider for students who are preparing to apply to law school:

For students who are applying Early Decision (ED):

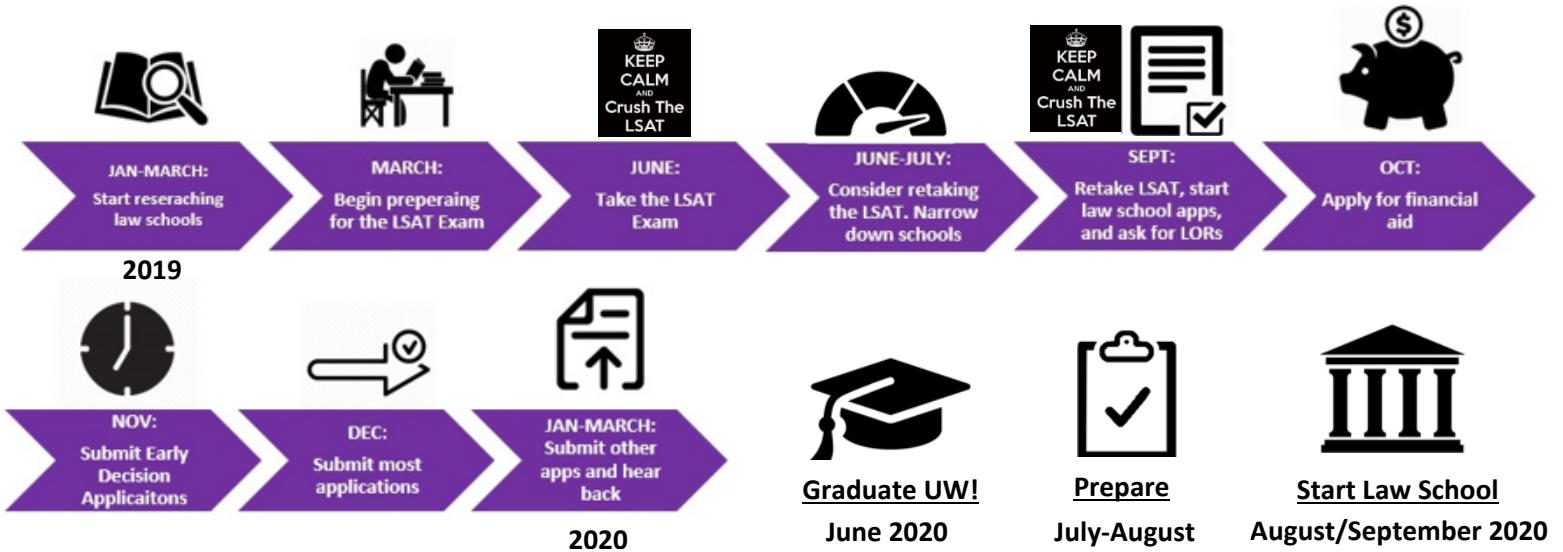


For students who are *not* applying Early Decision:



- There is no “right” timeline. Your timeline should be based on your own circumstances
- It is recommended that students start preparing to apply to law school at least one year prior to when they want to go
- How long is it going to take you study for the LSAT? (one year vs three months)
- Consider how heavy or how flexible your academic load is for spring quarter. If you want to apply ED, it is recommended you start studying for the LSAT during spring quarter
- *Please note that LSAT test dates vary year to year.* Plan your timeline accordingly to these dates and to register in a timely manner
- Ask yourself if you would you benefit from studying for the LSAT during the summer when you have more time and less things to juggle?
- Is there a school you want to apply early decision to? Remember, early decision admissions are binding

Example of Common Timeline for student who want to start law school after they graduate :



Your Timeline:



Pre-Law Internship Guide

While internships are not a requirement to apply or be accepted by law schools, they are beneficial and highly encouraged, as they can help you evaluate whether a legal career is a good fit for you. It is always advantageous to get exposure to the work environment, explore your interests, gain skills, and to build your professional network. Here are four ways to approach getting an internship as a pre-law undergraduate student:

Legal Exposure

Most "legal" internships are offered to 1L and 2L law students in law school. If you are looking to gain legal exposure as an undergraduate, your chances of finding an internship are higher if you look at positions that are more clerical and administrative based. It is important to note that you are gaining exposure and this is a great starting point in understanding what goes on to a day-to-day life of a lawyer in a work setting.

Area of Interest

Not all internships have to be in a legal setting. They can be more related to your broader area of interest. For example: If a student is interested in becoming an immigration lawyer, they may consider getting an internship at a non-profit or organization that works with immigrants. Though there may not be a legal aspect to the internship, the student is gaining valuable skills and experiences working directly with the population, policies, and work they want to pursue. In addition, the student is furthering their learning and commitment to public service, which may inform the type of law school and program they wish to attend.

Skills

The American Bar Association (ABA) lists the following core skills, values, knowledge, and experiences students can acquire before law school. Having these core skills can be a good foundation for your future legal education and work.

- Problem Solving
- Critical Reading
- Writing and Editing
- Oral Communication and Listening
- Research
- Organization and Management
- Public Service and Promotion of Justice
- Relationship-building & Collaboration
- Background Knowledge
- Exposure to the Law

Any type of internship, whether legal related or not, will be able to provide you some experience, training, and opportunities to gain and practice these skills.



Networking

Building a network is an important part of a student's educational and professional success. Ways you can network as a pre-law student include emailing lawyers and inviting them for informational interviews (LinkedIn is a great tool for this), attend and introduce yourself at law school fairs and events, and participate in pre-law related groups (UW Phi Alpha Delta). During your internship, challenge yourself to talk to as many people as you can. Ask these folks about their job and their experience with law school.

Tips:

- Search online: Handshake, Job and Internship Fairs, Idealist, Indeed, and LinkedIn
- Check out <https://careers.uw.edu/internships/>
- UW's Law Societies and Justice (LSJ) major has a comprehensive list of internships that their students have done in the past (<https://lsj.washington.edu/internship-requirement#recent>)
- Some majors will allow you to do an internship for credit while in school. Contact your departmental advisor to inquire if this can be done
- The Washington State Legislature offers a Legislative Internship Program to juniors and seniors of all ages where interns will spend winter quarter working in Olympia with staff as members of the Washington State House of Representatives or Senate
- Volunteer at non-profits, public interest organizations, legal clinics, and legal aid offices. Visit the King County Bar Association website and look under 'Volunteer Opportunities'
- Consider getting a legal job as file clerk, paralegal, or legal assistant during school or after graduation
- Other ways you can gain exposure and skills outside of doing an internship include joining a UW RSO, service learning with the Carlson Leadership & Public Service Center, student employment, taking on various leadership roles, research, taking various classes where these skills are practiced/learned, writing for the UW Daily, shadowing/informational interviews with attorneys, and volunteering
- Make an appointment on Handshake to speak with a pre-law career coach



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Tips for Writing your Law School Personal Statement

- Treat it as your interview (What do you want admissions readers to get to know about you?). This is your chance to go beyond the numbers (GPA and LSAT)
- Get personal (what's your story?). What is going to be your theme?
- What can your story reveal about you: character, values, goals, interests, achievements, and inspirations? If you write about overcoming adversity, emphasize the overcoming and not the adversity
- How can you show admission readers your COMMITMENT, PREPAREDNESS, and SKILLS for law school?
- Try to write a wholesome story that ties in all important aspects of yourself, why their law school, and why you want to become a lawyer
Example: Story about experiencing DV, how that impacted student, why they want to become a lawyer due to this experience, and why this law school because they offer a DV clinic in their program
- Write several versions. If you have several ideas, write them out!
- Prompts can vary (pay attention). Follow word/page limits and directions
- PROOFREAD & EDIT! YOUR WRITING SKILLS MATTER!

Personal Statement Do's

- Do start with a great opening and closing paragraph
(How are you going to catch the adcomm reader's attention? How are they going to remember you?)
- Do reveal things about yourself that adcomm readers would not know from the other parts of your application
- Do have good grammar, tone, spelling, and style (no run on sentences). Write clearly and concisely.
- Do tailor your statement to each particular law school (if applicable or asked to)
- Do have multiple people review your statement (best if this is someone who doesn't know you that well)

Personal Statement Dont's

- This is NOT a cover letter. Avoid chronological recitation of major events in your life or what's on your resume
- Do not use this space as your addendum or to repeat other supplemental questions
- Do not be vague or leave the adcomm reader wondering "why?"
- Do not use the "I want to save the world" or use "Savior" language (check you privilege)
- Do not discuss legal concepts or issues and stay as neutral as possible
- Do not talk about other people or their experiences in length (it's about YOU)
- Do not use/avoid inspirational quotes, rhetorical questions, and/or humor
- Do not try to cover too many things, pick your theme/story and stick with it!
- Do not try to be someone that you're not



Additional Tips:

Personal Statement Document

A collection of personal and diversity statements written by pre-law UW students

https://www.washington.edu/uua/advising/site/assets/files/1062/personal_statement_law.pdf



On Campus Resources:


- Make an appointment with a Pre-Law Career Coach through Handshake to look over your materials
- Odegaard Writing and Research Center @ Odegaard Library
<http://www.lib.washington.edu/ougl/owrc>
- CLUE Writing Center @ Mary Gates Hall
<https://webster.uaa.washington.edu/asp/website/get-help/clue/writing-center/>
- Instructional Center @ Instructional Center (must be affiliated with OMA&D)
<https://depts.washington.edu/ic/content/writing.php?style=graphics>
- UW Law School
(admissions office & career services)
- Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity
(pre-law student group on campus)
- Your advisors
(departmental advisors, UAA or OMA&D)



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Gap Year(s) & Law School

Once you have decided that you want to go to law school and start planning your timeline, you may want to ask yourself if you would benefit from taking a gap year or years before going.



– Here are some questions to ask yourself:

Would you benefit from a break?

If you are a traditional student, you have been in school for quite some time. Do you want to commit yourself to another three years of school after four years of undergrad? If you find yourself saying “I want to directly go to law school because I’m afraid of losing momentum by waiting and I will just never go”, ask yourself if this is really true? If you are afraid you will never go, how committed are you then to law school? Many students experience burn out during their graduate studies. A great way to prevent that from happening is making sure you give your mind, body, and mental health some care before committing to law school.

How prepared and confident are you to go to law school?

Did you do any internships, gain experiences, and/or network while you were an undergrad? Although academics prepared you in one aspect, internships, jobs, and other experiences can help you learn and gain real world experience about the profession. If you were unable to gain this insight and experience, consider taking gap years to do so. Going to law school is a big commitment. A great way of building confidence and showing this commitment is by experience.

What should I do during my gap years? What looks best to law schools?

Law schools are not looking for anything in particular. What is most important is that you are active during your gap year(s). This can mean working full-time, a fellowship, community service (e.g Teach for America, AmeriCorps, or the Peace Corps), or traveling. It can also be a combination of activities. Consider what type of experiences you want to gain that can help you feel confident about your commitment to law school and becoming a lawyer. By all means, these experiences do not have to be legal related and in fact, this can make you a more interesting applicant.



– Here are some factors to consider:

The average age of a 1L Law school student is 24

This means the average time a student takes off is between 2-3 years before going to law school. It is very common among students to take more than just one gap year. Giving yourself time to mature, gain self-confidence and real world experience can be a great advantage not just personally and professionally, but in preparation for law school.

Your senior year grades will be included in the GPA calculation

If you apply after you graduate, your senior year grades will be included in your LSAC GPA calculation. This may potentially increase your GPA and make you a more competitive applicant compared to using your end of junior year GPA.

Gap years allow time for full-time work, which can make you more attractive to legal employers for internships during law school and jobs after graduating with your JD

Many students assume that once they get into law school, they will not have to think about internships and career for the next three years. This is not true and most 1L students have to decide very early on where they want to do their internships and what area of law they want to study. If you are a student that has worked full-time in a related field, this will be advantageous to you not only getting the 1L and 2L summer internships you want, but also getting jobs after you graduate. Your resume in comparison to other law students will be more comprehensive and competitive to employers.



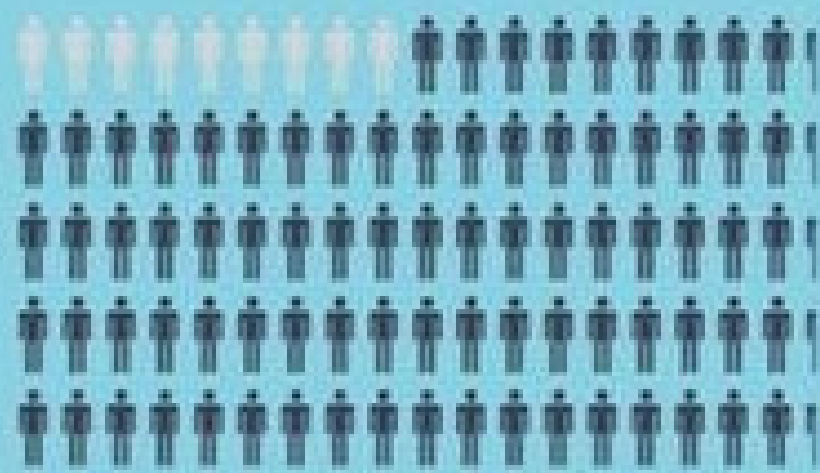
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GAP YEAR FACTS

A Gap Year is a structured time of personal growth when students take a break from formal education to increase self-awareness, challenge comfort zones and experiment with possible careers.



90% of Gap Year students return to or start college within a year

BURNOUT & SELF-DISCOVERY

Top two reasons cited for taking a Gap Year



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