

# RAISING THE BAR:

## PREPARING FOR LAW SCHOOL







## INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this, you have likely already made the choice to embark on an immensely rewarding intellectual experience. You want a degree that can open doors to endless career possibilities, and you're ready to invest in your future. You've decided to go to law school.

Congratulations on your decision. It's one that will have a lasting impact on the rest of your life—and whatever your legal aspirations, you're in for a challenging, gratifying journey to a Juris Doctor degree. So what now? Researching programs and choosing where to apply are the logical next steps, but before you select the right school for you, there are several things you need to do to make yourself a competitive candidate.

Want some help? The Admissions team at Syracuse University College of Law whittled that list of essential must-do's down to the most important steps. This book will cover raising the bar in the following ways:

- Preparing Your Application
- Professional Image
- Finding the Right Fit
- Financial Awareness

And because we genuinely want to see more law students succeed, we're sharing those steps with you now.

**Let's get started.**



# PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

Part of perfecting your professional image is having your act together. Ideal law school candidates are prepared to apply, eager to learn, and equipped with transferable skills and experiences. Here's where to start:

## Take The Test

To apply to any law school, you first need to register with the Law School Admission Council ([www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)) and then take the LSAT. The test is scored on a scale of 120 to 180, with 151 being the national average. The test consists of 5 sections of multiple choice questions and 1 section of writing. These questions evaluate: Reading Comprehension, Analytical Reasoning, and Logical Reasoning. Remember to plan ahead, most test registrations close over a month prior to the exam date. If you feel strongly that your score doesn't best depict your capabilities, you can retest—but know that law schools will see your complete test record. Your best bet: study hard and plan to take the LSAT once, but leave time to retake if needed.

## Get Your Application in Top-Notch Shape

Completing the application is the easy part. Next, focus on securing up to four strong letters of recommendation and penning an impeccable personal statement.

When writing personal statements, the process does not have to be overwhelming. Consider some personal attributes you want to highlight.

Some characteristics we suggest are:

- Intelligence
- Originality/Creativity
- Communication
- Judgment and Maturity
- Persistence
- Leadership

At Syracuse Law, we want to learn about you and what you will add to our incoming class and law school community.



## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Register for the LSAT and the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)
- Research Law Schools
- Prepare Applications
- Take the LSAT
- Write Your Personal Statement
- Prepare Addendums (G.P.A., LSAT, Diversity, Character and Fitness )
- Update Resume
- Request Transcripts
- Gather Letters of Recommendation
- Edit, Edit, Edit!







## Five Quick Personal Statement Tips

- 1 Choose a topic that reflects your skills. Show, don't tell.**
- 2 Be genuine. Don't exaggerate or use vocabulary you think Admissions wants to hear. Use your own.**
- 3 Be energetic. Use the active voice and keep it interesting.**
- 4 Don't repeat what can be read in your resume.**
- 5 Proofread and have others proofread for you.**

## Be Honest

Err on the side of disclosure versus withholding information on your application. Candor and honesty on your application will help ease your process when applying for the bar exam following law school. Your character and fitness will be revisited at that time and bar committees will be referencing your answers submitted on your law school application. Put your best foot forward and submit your application with up-to-date, accurate information.

## Demonstrate Experience, Knowledge and Skills

While no specific undergraduate majors or courses are required in order for you to enroll in law school, Admissions Committees want to see that you've done some homework. Polish your skills and don't shy away from courses with extensive reading, writing, and analysis. These classes will better assist you with the basic foundations for law school. It's great if your prelaw track includes hands-on experience like interning at a law firm or shadowing a lawyer, but if it doesn't, discuss your leadership skills, work experience, or volunteer activities and how these have prepared you for the rigors of law school.

# PROFESSIONAL IMAGE: LOOK THE PART OF A LAW STUDENT

Wherever your degree takes you, keep this in mind: your image should be polished and professional.

## Clean Up Your Resume

The resume is an important component of your application. It tells Admissions Counselors what type of student you are through how you have spent your time in and out of the classroom. Before clicking attach, make sure you have a well-organized and easy to follow resume. Not sure what changes to make? Here are some things we look for:

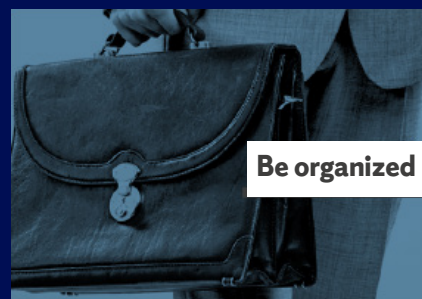
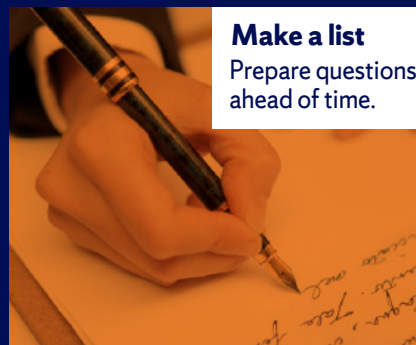
- Focus on keeping it to one page, if possible.
- Be informative, but concise.
- Highlight not only skills, but job successes.
- Demonstrate leadership experience through internship, extra-curricular, and/or real-world experiences.

## Button Up Your Presentation

A professional career starts with a good first impression, the last thing you want is to be memorable for a negative reason. Look put together, and remember to carry yourself with confidence.

Prepare for any conversations you may have throughout the admissions process—with interviewers, alumni, mentors, and other prospective students at formal and informal events. In any of these situations, your goal is to be able to participate in a discussion on anything from unique aspects of the school that drew you there in the first place to your own legal and professional experiences.

## WHEN IT'S TIME FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH ADMISSIONS OR AN INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT



## YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST



If your Facebook privacy settings aren't locked up tight, go through your posts and photos and delete anything inappropriate.



If it isn't already, change your LinkedIn profile photo to a professional headshot and update your work experience to match your resume.



Are you on Twitter? Delete any tweets or retweets on your stream that you wouldn't want a potential employer or admissions officer to read.



Do any of your inactive social profiles show up in a Google search? Consider deleting your account if you no longer use that platform.



# FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Whether you are fresh out of college, a few years into your career, or a seasoned professional, selecting the right law school can be very stressful. In order to make an informed decision, prospective law students must research more than just rankings to find the right fit.

## Do Your Research

Here are several factors to help you select the right law school for you:

- **Admissions Criteria**—Diversify your applications by including safety, competitive and reach law schools.
- **Location**—Do you know where you want to practice law? If so, do they have a critical mass of alumni working in that geographic area?
- **Employment Data**—Research employment rates 10 months after graduation and types of jobs.
- **Law School Environment**—Visit potential law schools and connect with law school alumni and/or current law students.
- **Overall Cost**—Create a spreadsheet that compares tuition and projected living and other expenses minus scholarship and grants.
- **Joint Degree Programs**—Know your options. Are you able to complete two degrees concurrently? Are there additional costs involved?
- **Bar Passage Rates**—Research the school's bar passage rate and compare that to the state average.
- **Reputation of the Law School**—Ask attorneys, pre-law advisors and friends that are current law students.
- **Specialized Programs**—Look for institutes, externships, clinics, certificates, student associations, law journals or elective courses in the area of law that you are interested in.



## VISIT POTENTIAL LAW SCHOOLS AND CONNECT WITH LAW SCHOOL ALUMNI AND/OR CURRENT LAW STUDENTS







## FINANCIAL AWARENESS

Choosing to go to law school will have an impact on your future and is an important commitment to both your time and your finances, therefore it's important to consider all aspects of your legal education, including financing.

### Advice for Present and Future Finances

Before starting law school, students should take account of their financial situation and work on minimizing their consumer debt. By trying to reduce consumer debt, students can alleviate financial stress while in law school. It's important to be aware of your borrowing and spending habits. Students can save themselves from incurring more debt by creating a budget and tracking current spending habits.

Positive Financial Habits:

- Avoid indulgences and excessive purchases.
- Borrow wisely and be aware of what you owe.
- Get a part-time job or apply for Federal Work Study if available.
- Save in areas where you can cut costs like splitting rent with a roommate or learning to cook.

### Orange You \$avvy

Don't forget to consider outside resources for possible funding. During the application process, research funding and aid offered at the schools you are applying to. Many schools offer merit scholarships and need-based grants.

At Syracuse Law, we do not require a secondary application to be considered for merit scholarships. Watch for deadlines for scholarships and financial aid applications. You don't want to miss out on potential funding because you missed the deadline!

Don't limit yourself—broaden your search to outside scholarships for law students, but also consider searching for educational scholarships that pertain to your other interests.



# CONCLUSION

In the interest of time—because you now have quite a bit of work to do—we'll keep our closing argument short. If law school is in your future, and you cannot wait for the day you sit in on your first deposition, it's essential to start thinking like a law student and a lawyer as early as possible.

We hope you found this information helpful in getting your started, and we also hope you'll consider Syracuse Law. From our world-class faculty and unique programs to our dedicated alumni network, it's the ideal place to hone your professional image and set yourself up for a successful career in law. Schedule your visit today!

## Contact Admissions

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 [@SUCollegeofLaw](https://twitter.com/SUCollegeofLaw)

 [@syracuselaw](https://www.instagram.com/syracuselaw)



## HELPFUL WEBSITES

[www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)

[www.accesslex.org](http://www.accesslex.org)

[www.law.syr.edu](http://www.law.syr.edu)

