Applying to Law School (Things I Wish I’d Known When I Applied)

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So you want to go to law school...

- There are some things you should think about before you start the application process.
  - Why do you want to go to law school?
  - What are you looking to get out of your law school experience?
  - What do you have to offer the law schools to which you apply?
Why do you want to go to law school?

- Educational advancement
- Job opportunities
- Contribute to society
- To become an attorney (why?)
- To become a judge
- Prestige
- Money
What are you looking to get out of your law school experience?

- A solid education
- Job connections
- Financial Aid
- Academic support/counseling
- Faculty interaction
- Nurturing environment v. competitive environment
- Faculty to student ratio
- Diversity (embrace v. tolerate)
- Debt
- Community involvement
What do you have to offer the law schools to which you apply?

- Become familiar with any minimum or cut-off requirements schools may have (if any). Typically, the minimum requirements set by the ABA are that all applicants must have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher education, and they must have a valid LSAT score. Beyond that, schools will vary, so get to know them individually.
Go big or go home...

- Once you’ve found programs you like, don’t be afraid to apply.
- Worst case scenario... you won’t be admitted.
- Get to know the admissions folks- they are there to help you navigate the application process.
- If at all possible, visit the schools. Try to talk to someone there.
... but keep it real, too.

- In choosing the schools you will apply to, your list should have a majority of schools that you can reasonably expect to be admitted by, as well as a couple of “dream” schools. Don’t forget your safety schools either!
- Only apply to schools that you would really choose to attend if they ended up being your only option.
So now that you’ve selected your schools...

- Prepare and apply early!
- Applying to law school is like another class (time-wise).
- LSAT preparation is also like another class.
- Start making friends with your instructors.
- Get to know the application process for each school.
- Register with LSAC.
Application Process

- Application Form
- Personal Statements
- Resume
- Letters of Recommendation
- Undergraduate Transcripts
- LSAT score(s)
Application Form

- Submit early!
- Provide as much information as you can.
- Every part of the application is important (and will be reviewed by the committee).
- Remember: Optional is never really optional!
- Use the resources available to you- admissions offices, pre-law advisors, etc. If you don’t know- ask!
Personal Statements

- Try to become aware of the statement prompts in advance, and start thinking about your responses.
- Personal statements are the closest you will get to an interview- it’s time to shine!
- Let us get to know the real you. Each prompt will be different, but they are all about you.
- Ask professors, TA’s, others to read your statements, and to provide you feedback.
Personal Statements (continued)

- A good statement will help you stand out from the crowd.
- Don’t sell yourself short! We value your uniqueness.
- HOWEVER... don’t get cute.
- Be professional- you are applying to a professional program, to become a lawyer-in-training. Write like one!
- Follow the guidelines you are provided.
Resume

- A good resume will work hand in hand with your transcripts and GPA.
- What kinds of things have you been doing before law school? There is no wrong answer.
- We are looking for interesting and thoughtful students, and not just former legal assistants, paralegals, etc.
- Include all your experience, even if you think it’s unrelated.
- Don’t worry about page limits (this isn’t for a job).
Letters of Recommendation

- The letters that will be most helpful will be from professors and people who know your academic work.
- Letters from employers and others can be helpful if they can address your writing skills, research skills, communication, and analytical thinking.
- Stronger grades and LSAT scores can give some flexibility with the letters.
- Find out how many letters each school requires.
Transcripts

- Schools will look at your entire transcript, and not just your GPA.
- We will look for improvements, positive trends, difficulty of your major, etc.
- Any gaps or discrepancies should be addressed in your personal statements/addendums and your resume.
LSAT Score

- A valid score is one which was earned within the last five years.
- Some schools take the highest scores, while others will average all your scores. Be aware of what your schools do.
- Be aware of deadlines and LSAC policies.
- Prepare for the LSAT - practice, practice, practice!
- Don’t take the test just to “see how you’ll do.” All scores count!
Ask Questions!

- Admissions people want to hear from you, so take advantage of their knowledge.
- Talk to your professors, current law students, or law professors.
- School websites have contact information for professors and administrators, and they can get you in touch with law students.
Thank you for your participation!

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