

LAW SCHOOL FOR STEM

Most people assume that in order to go to law school you must first get a bachelor's degree in a humanities or social science field, such as English, Philosophy, Political Science, or History. Not only are more and more STEM students applying to law school, but many of them have developed skills through their STEM careers that are well suited to studying law, including problem solving and analytical skills, research skills, and organization and management skills.

Law School Process

If you are thinking about applying to law school it is very important to plan ahead. Make sure you check out the CDC's **Preparing for Graduate School** Tipsheet to get more information on preparing and applying to graduate school. After you've done that, the next thing you will want to do, and keep doing, is visit the Law School Admission Council Website (**lsac.org**) to learn about the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and begin researching law schools.

Here are some other steps you will want to take, broken down by year:

Freshman Year

- Start building your critical reading skills
- Read up on the law field
- Consider a minor in Political Science and Law; Law and Technology; or Society, Technology, and Policy
- Visit WPI's pre-law advisor, **Professor Kent Rissmiller**

Sophomore Year

- Continue to strengthen your academic record
- Apply to IQPs in Law and Technology (IQP Division 52)
- Look into internship and/or co-op opportunities

Junior Year

- Visit Prof. Rissmiller to discuss the law school application process
- Prepare for the LSAT by researching prep courses
- Begin contacting professors for letters of recommendation
- Make visits to law schools of interest
- Take the LSAT in the spring/summer

Senior Year

- If you haven't done so yet, take the LSAT by October 1st
- Visit law schools and narrow choices
- Get faculty recommendations
- Apply to law schools—discuss with Prof. Rissmiller
- Complete graduation requirements

Learn more:

lsac.org/jd/applying-to-law-school/overview

wpi.edu/academics/prelaw/law-advising.html



WPI

Career
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Personal Statements & Resumes

Personal Statements

Most law schools will use the personal statement in two ways: as a sample of your writing abilities, and to assess what you will bring to their program. While you will want to have a well-written and compelling statement that gives the admission committee a good sense of who you are and what has motivated you to apply to law school, there are some practices that you will want to avoid in writing your personal statement.

First, avoid legalese and overly complicated language. For one, if you use legal jargon in your statement, you run the risk of misusing it. This is not the time to try to impress the program of your choice with your immense vocabulary and existing knowledge of the law and legal terms. Remember, the people reading your personal statement are lawyers, and if you misuse legal terms or present a weak argument on a legal point, it could count against you.

Second, don't be too broad in your topic. This is not the time to write your life story. Instead, pick a specific focus for your personal statement so that you will be able to go into detail about one impactful experience, rather than giving general information on several.

Finally, while the personal statement is an opportunity for you to highlight qualities and/or experiences that might make you stand out, don't fall into the trap of shock-and-awe, overly dramatic storytelling. This is not to say that you shouldn't talk about personal experiences that have impacted you and led to your decision to apply to law school. You should certainly talk about such things, but remember that the goal is to quickly pique the reader's interest in you, not to elicit a strong emotional reaction.

Resume

Like the personal statement, your resume will give the admissions committee an opportunity to learn more about your qualifications and you as a person. While your law school resume will follow the same general guidelines for format and content as a work-oriented resume, there are some differences.

Certainly, the admissions committee will want to know about your project and work experience, but they will also want to know about your community involvement on- and off-campus through student clubs, athletic teams, and volunteer organizations. It is okay to go into more detail about your involvement in these activities than you normally might on a resume for an employer. Also, you can typically have a longer resume for law school than you would for an employer, and you may need to do so. It is not uncommon for law schools to accept two- or three-pages resumes. However, you should pay close attention to any guidelines that your school of choice has for the resume in case they list specific length requirements.

Career Paths

There are many different career paths open to law students upon the completion of their degree. While you certainly don't have to decide prior to law school which path you want to follow, it is good to be aware of the options that will be open to you. Here are a few of the more common ones:

Private Practice

While there are many options for pursuing a career in law, private practice continues to be the most popular choice. Private practice involves representing individuals or companies at a private law firm or in solo practice. Starting out your career in private practice, especially at a firm, can provide valuable experience and open many doors for you later on.

Corporate Counsel

Some attorneys choose to pursue positions in business through the in-house legal departments of companies. Typically, those who wish to work in business will start out in a private practice, as many companies require previous experience, and then move on to an in-house legal department after gaining several years of experience. Some companies will hire students directly out of law school, but this is less common.

Judicial Clerkships

Typically, judicial clerkships will last for one or two years and provide an opportunity to gain insight into and exposure to the courtroom. The main duties of a judicial clerk are legal research, writing bench memoranda, drafting opinions, legal analysis, communicating with counsel, briefing the judge, and assisting the judge during courtroom proceedings. A judicial clerkship will provide you with valuable experience, plus your judge may become a valuable mentor to you throughout your career.

Public Interest

Working in a public interest organization provides the opportunity to gain experience while promoting social justice by representing individuals, groups, or causes that are disenfranchised in society. A few examples of the various issues that public interest organizations take up include civil rights/liberties, education, the environment, LGBTQ+, health, homelessness, immigrants/refugees, poverty, and prisoner's rights. A few of the different types of organizations that address these issues are impact litigation groups, legal services organizations, public defender offices, policy centers, and international advocacy organizations.

Government

Attorneys who are interested in working for the government have many different career options at the federal, state, and local level. At the federal level students may explore opportunities at the Department of Justice, Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Transportation, or Senate or House working for either individual senators and representatives or committees and administrative offices. At the state level there are the state Attorney General's office, district attorney offices, and in-house counsel departments in various state agencies. At the local level there are municipal legal departments and, in larger cities, in-house legal departments within city agencies.

JD Advantage

JD Advantage positions are those for which a JD is considered an advantage but admission to the bar is not required. One popular area for JD Advantage jobs is in compliance departments within companies, especially those in industries that are heavily regulated. Compliance positions do not involve direct practice of the law, but having a JD is a definite advantage in these roles, as one will be required to have strong knowledge of the rules and regulations set by the government. Compliance departments are not the only area of opportunity for JD Advantage positions, as there are many options for those who are interested in these positions. Therefore, it is important to engage in self-assessment to determine which positions you want to pursue and be able to articulate your reasoning to a potential employer.

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Dual Degree Programs

Did you know that some universities offer dual degree programs in law and STEM fields? To learn more, check out the dual degree programs highlighted below.

University of Pennsylvania: law.upenn.edu/crossdisciplinary/jd-engineering

University of Notre Dame: graduateschool.nd.edu/departments-and-programs/dual-degree-programs/law-and-engineering

Stanford University: law.stanford.edu/education/degrees/joint-degrees-within-stanford-university/#slsnav-established-joint-degrees

Syracuse University: law.syr.edu/academics/joint-degree

Texas Tech University: law.ttu.edu/acp/academics/jdp

Other Resources

The American Bar Association: americanbar.org/aba.html

Q & A with Law School Admissions from programs around the country: usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/applying/features/law-school-admissions

Articles to Check Out

- engineering.purdue.edu/EAA/Blog/EngineeringToLawSchool
- usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2012/05/07/how-to-apply-to-law-school-as-an-engineer-or-scientist
- usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2012/05/30/in-law-school-admissions-stem-sells
- usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2015/07/13/3-challenges-for-law-school-applicants-with-stem-degrees

Career Development Center
Project Center
508-831-5260 | cdc@wpi.edu
wpi.edu/+cdc

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