**The Law School Application Process**

The law school application process may seem daunting, but treat it like eating an elephant: one bite at a time. This guide is meant to provide you with a quick overview of the process that can serve as a basis for further exploration. It is by no means the complete story.

**Elements of Your Application**

When all is said and done, your application will consist of the following components:

* Your transcripts (from every post-high school institution you attended)
* Your LSAT score
* Letters of recommendation (typically two, and usually at least one academic)
* A personal statement
* A resume
* A character and fitness addendum (if you have any criminal history or history of academic dishonesty)
* An academic addendum (optional, used to explain a particular rough patch in your transcript for example)
* A diversity addendum (not all schools accept them, but some do)

**How It Works**

Thankfully, this process is not as difficult as it appears. LSAC acts as a hub for all of your applications. You sign up for a free account with them in order to register for the LSAT; you sign up for a paid “credential assembly service” account with them to manage the rest of your materials. You will direct your colleges to send your transcripts to LSAC. You never touch them. Your letter-writers will send their letters directly to LSAC. You will then log into LSAC, choose a law school, fill out a quick application, attach all of the supplemental documents, and hit “submit.”

**Timing**

There is a lot of lead time in the application process. You certainly can wait until application deadlines (February or March), but there are advantages to completing your applications a bit earlier. If you aim to complete your applications no later than January 1 of the year before you begin law school, you will be happy you did.

What that means for your timing …

The LSAT is offered in January, March, June, July, September, and November. If you are aiming for a January 1 submission, you need to take the test no later than November of your senior year. Note that the July test is “non disclosed,” meaning LSAC will not provide you with your answers, correct answers, etc. June or September are better options. As you decide on a testing date, think about what else will be going on in your life, how and when you will be studying, etc.

If you take the test in June or September and you find you need to retake the test, January is fine. It is not the end of the world to submit your applications closer to the deadline.

Start your personal statement the spring of your junior year. That may sound crazy for something that is only two pages long, but students often struggle with the personal statement, and it’s great to have it out of the way before you’re neck-deep in the LSAT.

Ask for letters of recommendation at the very beginning of the fall semester of your senior year. Faculty in particular take a long time to complete letters because they get a lot of requests, and the demands on their time increase as the semester wears on. Get in early.

If you are happy with your GPA during your fall term, go ahead and request your transcripts in October or November. But if you need a boost and your fall term may be looking up, wait until AFTER your fall grades are posted before ordering your transcripts. That way law schools are seeing the highest possible GPA you can offer.