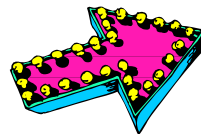


So, You Want to Be a Lawyer?



This is what you need to know.....



Being a Lawyer

Working as a lawyer can be a rewarding career choice. A lawyer advises clients in their business and personal affairs. That means that lawyers assist in buying or selling homes, adopting children, starting businesses and planning for the needs of their clients' businesses and families. Lawyers also assist clients with litigation in court. For example, in criminal cases, lawyers defend the person accused of the crime and they prosecute the case for the government that has brought the charges. While being a lawyer can sometimes be financially rewarding, it takes years of long hard work and dedication. The payoff comes from doing a good job, helping your client and seeing that justice is done. Don't be fooled by what you see on television. Lawyers work hard. Some work for the government, some work in law firms and others work for companies or alone. Many lawyers work for public interest groups representing the poor, protecting the environment or defending our civil liberties. Other lawyers become judges or professors.

The choice is up to you.

What it takes

Lawyers come from all sorts of backgrounds, races and experiences. Despite the differences, there is one training program that all lawyers complete. They have graduated from high school, college and law school. In addition, before you can work as a lawyer, you generally have to pass the state bar exam, a national legal ethics exam, and receive a license to practice law. This pamphlet provides guidance on how to become a lawyer. You should also ask for more information from your guidance counselor and the admissions office at any college or university you want to attend.

One important thing to remember is that if you are convicted of a crime, you will have to disclose that fact on your law school and bar applications. Many people convicted of crimes have gone on to become lawyers. Still, a criminal record will complicate the process and probably make it more difficult to get the job you want. The bottom line?

GET GOOD GRADES AND FINISH SCHOOL.

DO THAT, AND YOU COULD BECOME A TERRIFIC LAWYER!

High School

The first step to becoming a lawyer is completing high school. In high school, take advantage of classes and activities that help you develop writing and public speaking skills. Lawyers must be able to tell a story clearly and in a way that convinces the audience that the lawyer is correct. Take a speech class or participate in drama or debate; write short stories, news articles and essays; be a leader in student government and activities. You also need excellent reading comprehension and analytical skills, so English, math and science are also important. If you want to get into your first choice of college and law school, the most important thing is to maintain your good grades and graduate.

College

A four-year college degree is the next step. No particular major is required to become a lawyer. Lawyers give advice to all types of people and businesses, so you will need a well-rounded college education. Many college students who want to be lawyers select traditional liberal arts majors, such as history, literature or philosophy. Other students choose majors to prepare them to specialize in a particular area of law, such as technology, medicine, art, the environment, finance, government or other areas. It really does not matter. You can be a lawyer with a degree in archeology, astronomy, Russian literature, theater, physical education, art history or whatever else you choose. **If you have a strong interest in *any* undergraduate major, pursue it and focus on getting the best grades you can.** Good grades in college will help you get into the law school of your choice.

Take a sampling of classes from different areas. You will be able to use everything you learned in college when you are a lawyer. Many colleges offer a “pre-law” program designed for students hoping to go to law school. **A pre-law program is not required for law school** and may even limit your chance to be exposed to a broad range of classes and activities. Ask your college advisors about the advantages and disadvantages of participating in a pre-law program.

Law School and the Bar Exam

To get into law school, you must take the national Law School Admission Test (LSAT), usually the summer before your final year in college. There are study guides and commercial classes to help you prepare for the LSAT. Law schools review your LSAT score and college grades when you apply for admission, so good grades and a good LSAT score should be among your goals.

Several law school guidebooks explaining the admission standards at each of the law schools are available in libraries and bookstores. There are over 170 law schools in the country, so you will be able to find one that is right for you.

It takes three years to complete law school if you attend full time. Some schools offer night or part-time programs. After law school, you must take and pass the bar exam in the state where you want to work. **In most states, you must graduate from an American Bar Association (ABA) approved law school to be permitted to take the bar exam.** Ask if the school you want to attend is approved or call the ABA at 312.988.5522 to check. You will also have to take and pass a national legal ethics exam. Once you have passed both exams, the state gives you a license to practice law in that state.

To Find Out More

Talk to your guidance counselor. If you know any lawyers, talk to them about their jobs. Ask a teacher, Scout leader, or other adult to arrange to take a group to watch a trial at your local courthouse or invite a lawyer to speak to your class or group.

Here is a short list of books about lawyers that you may enjoy reading:

One-Le by Scott Turow:

The first year at Harvard Law School

The Paper Chase by John Jay Osborne:

A fictional account of a year at Harvard Law School

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee:

The classic tale of a widower lawyer raising his children and defending a black man accused of a crime in the divided South

Gideon's Trumpet by Anthony Lewis:

The true story of the Supreme Court case that guaranteed the poor the right to a lawyer in a criminal case

Admissions Offices for Illinois Law Schools

University of Chicago (312.702.9484)

DePaul University (312.362.6831)

Chicago - Kent College of Law (312.906.5020)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (217.244.6415)

John Marshall Law School (312.427.2737)

Loyola University (312.915.7170)

Northern Illinois University (815.753.8595)

Northwestern University (312.503.8465)

Southern Illinois University (618.453.8858)

Because you do not have to attend law school in any particular state to receive a license to practice there, you might also want to contact law schools in other states. But remember, you will have to get a license in any state before you practice there. There are guidebooks available that describe all of the law schools in the United States.

—information provided by—

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