

# How to become a lawyer



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The Myths and Truths of Becoming an Attorney Our society today puts a few above the many; in this case we put certain positions or jobs on a hypothetical pedestal. This is not to say that these idealized positions of what we perceive to be power are not important or are easy to attain. To get to these positions requires an enormous amount of work and dedication. The positions I speak of specifically are the attorneys who practice law in our country.

Lawyers or Attorneys are the people who as my father once said " Run the World", of course he did not mean this literally however what he said struck a chord in me, and subsequently I am writing a paper on how to become one. The first thing that must be taken into account when trying to become a lawyer is yourself, becoming a lawyer is a difficult task and while it may pay off in the long haul you must ask yourself why you are doing it. If money is the main factor that motivates you to become a lawyer my advice would be to choose another career.

Being a lawyer is a lot of work once you are licensed not to mention the effort you must put in to even be a candidate for the bar association. " The median annual wage of lawyers was \$112, 760 in May 2010. " (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). This in comparison to the median wage of our country for all jobs a lot of money almost 80, 000 dollars to be precise. " Salaries of experienced lawyers vary widely according to the type, size, and location of their employer. Lawyers who own their own practices usually earn less than those who are partners in law firms. ( Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) Knowing that you have a choice to make between the probable

amount of money you can make, or do you want to be your own boss. The very first thing you do when pursuing a career such as this is to commit to it. If you want to be a good attorney and not just a hack you have to commit yourself to the law if you want to be good at it you have to believe in what you do. If you want to be a District attorney for example, it would be counterproductive were people to discover that you do not believe in the laws you strive to protect.

Now that is just a mental step or decision really, and once it is complete which for most of you reading this paper it should be you can begin your journey to become a lawyer. The next and first difficult decision is to decide what you want to major in for your undergraduate education, while it is a general assumption that you would major in prelaw studies, my advice will be the opposite. The last thing I would advise a student to do is pursue what many scholars believe to be a useless degree. The following numbers are the current unemployment rates of college graduates with a degree in certain areas. 17 Studio art 8. 0%; 18 Pre-law & legal studies 7. 9%; 7. 7% 20. Liberal arts 7. 6%. " (O'SHAUGHNESSY, 2011) You may notice that out of the 173 majors looked at a prelaw major is one of the top twenty, meaning that this degree is one of the least employable choices. My advice and my personal plan is to get a degree in something that I or you could get a job with should law school fall through, you must always plan for the possibility that at some point along the way you will no longer want to pursue a career as a lawyer. For me this means a bachelors in Mechanical Engineering for you could mean a number of things.

The greatest myth or misconception about becoming a lawyer is that you should major in prelaw. This is false because doing well in a major with substance and even different material will show the law schools you are applying to that you have a good work ethic and are intelligent. This combined with a high LSAT score and a good GPA will be more than enough to get you into good law school. " Many law schools, particularly those approved by the ABA, also require applicants to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), a test that measures applicants' aptitude for the study of law. ( Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) Due to the amount of consideration given to your score on the LSATs the next step in becoming a lawyer after you have done all that you can to be sure you have the best GPA possible is to begin your preparation for the LSATs. Andrew Brody said " You wouldn't run a marathon every day to train for a marathon," " But you also wouldn't do nothing all week and then run miles and miles on the weekend. You do a little bit of focused work [everyday] to keep yourself in shape ith occasional long runs—or practice tests—mixed in. " (Burnsed, 2010) Andrew is the " national content director for LSAT programs for the Princeton Review" (Burnsed, 2010) This is a metaphor for the LSATs which simply means that to succeed on this test you have to be constantly working on the preparation for the test. " It rewards the test taker that understands there are easy ones to be had in the back of the section," he says. " When it gets harder toward the middle, it's often advantageous to go to the back and work backward. (Burnsed, 2010) Unlike many other tests there is a known pattern to the LSATs which is explained above, knowing this simple trick can help you tremendously on your LSATs. Finally the LSATs have been rumored to no longer be a mandatory requirement to law schools. While this may be

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true in some cases I suggest not limiting yourself to those schools and also to take the test either way. The reason this is suggested is due to the way it is taken into account historically, and because of this many people believe even if it is not required at a college it will be taken into consideration.

Hence having a negative implication on your admission should it not be submitted. The next step in the process of becoming a lawyer is to choose a law school. This may sound like a daunting task but when you finish your schooling and look back in retrospect it will be one of the simplest steps on your journey. " A school's reputation is usually greater on its home turf than anywhere else (except for some of the internationally known schools, like Harvard and Yale). If you aren't going to a Top 10 school, apply to the schools in the state or region where you might want to practice law. (Princeton Review) Due to this fact, choosing a law school may have deeper implications than you would imagine. Before choosing which school to attend specifically you must first narrow it down to a general area where you may want to set up a practice someday. Once you do that choosing a type of law is your next step however it is not essential if you have no idea thus far as to your preference. " Having a specialty in mind can assist you in deciphering what schools will best fit your needs.

For instance, if you are very interested in environmental law, it might be better to attend the Vermont Law School rather than New York University. Vermont is one of the most highly regarded schools in the country when it comes to environmental law. "(Princeton Review) After this decision has been made, the hard work can begin. One of the hardest parts about becoming a lawyer is now beginning and if you had made it this far the hope

will be that you are smart enough and dedicated enough to handle the work load associated with the programs curriculum.

Rather than explaining how to do every minuet piece of work in law school correctly we will explore some of the things to avoid when in law school. the next piece of information comes in the form of an anecdote from a friend of my father, who happens to be an attorney for the bar association. We will call the student in this story x so as to keep the confidentiality of said student. “ Student x was in law school a few years ago when she sought my help with an issue pertaining to the bar, she had been caught for plagiarism by one of her professors.

The paper in which plagiarism was found had 97 footnotes; she said she plagiarized two sentences from an online paper. ”(Braccialarghe, 2012) This is one of the first things to avoid, plagiarism is taken even more seriously by higher education than it was when we were all in high school. According to Mr. Braccialarge, the bar association takes this offense extremely seriously along with every other offense against the laws of our country. Their thinking on this according to Mr. Braccialarge is that if you are willing to Break a law now for a grade what would you do to win a case.

Due to this line of thinking my best advice to anyone who wants to be a lawyer is to keep your nose clean and stay out of trouble with the law. When asked why she plagiarized in her paper the students answer was according to Mr. Braccialarghe that she took the work from a paper written by an undergraduate and was embarrassed as a senior in law school to be using an undergrads paper to assist in writing her own. The lesson to learn from this is

that rather than cheat to save face, put in the effort required to find a viable source.

The final step after graduating from law school is the much feared ABA examination or licensing test to become an attorney. " To practice law in any state, a person must be admitted to its bar under rules established by the jurisdiction's highest court. The requirements vary by individual states and jurisdictions. "( Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) For reasons of time constraints we will examine the finer points of the examination and how to pass it in a specific state, Florida in this case. " Prepare. This is not the kind of test that you can cram for and expect to pass.

Take months to study. Take practice tests and write practice essays. Know the idiosyncratic differences between multi-state and Florida law. "( Humphrey, 2012) The biggest difference from one test to another is the laws that are created at a state level. Each state has its own laws that pertain only to the state in question; due to this you must not just prepare for the exam in a general respect but focus in on the state where you wish to practice. This is why going to law school in the area you wish to practice law is a great help.

Now that you have passed the bar you are a licensed attorney and can begin your career as a lawyer. Being a lawyer means many things, it means being on a different level than you are without your J. D. and license to practice law. You will be held to a higher standard than you would be otherwise, and due to this you may have to give up some things you previously wanted or strived for. As a lawyer you have a duty to your clients and your country, whether that is to convict a criminal or defend, I ask one thing from you.

Do it with integrity and dedication that you must possess to have come this far. " Often, issues of ethics and professionalism raise complicated questions, involve shades of grey, and require serious thought and contemplation to resolve. Sometimes, however, all it takes to figure out whether a given action or decision is the right one is to ask: ' Is this stupid? "'—(David Argenter) If this is kept in mind, staying on the straight and narrow becomes easier and with that becoming an attorney does also.

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