LSAT 101: an Introduction to the LSAT

Presenter: John Rood
Founder, Next Step Test Preparation

Our webinar will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m., EST

Audio is available through your computer. Alternatively, you may phone 1-866-642-1665 followed by 334512
Featured Presenter: John Rood

- Founded Next Step Test Preparation
- Worked with 300+ LSAT students over the last 6 years
- Graduate of Michigan State and the University of Chicago
• The LSAT in Law School Admissions

• What’s On the Exam?

• How Should You Prepare?
What is the LSAT? Who takes it?

The LSAT is required by students applying to almost all ABA-approved law schools.

While the importance of the LSAT varies by admissions department, generally the LSAT and GPA are by far the largest factors in admissions decisions.

Put another way – the LSAT is more important in law school admissions than SAT and ACT are in college admissions.
The LSAT serves important functions to admissions committees

• Standardize applicants across undergraduate institutions
• Test law-school applicable skills (yes, you will use these skills in law school)
• Predict first-year success
• Weed out unserious applicants

But, importantly, not test your ability as an attorney.
How is the test scored?

- **Raw score:** number of questions right out of total (usually 99-101)
- **Scaled score:** 120-180
- **Percentile rank**

### Typical Score Conversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>Scaled Score</th>
<th>Percentile Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 15</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>99.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Ok, so what do I need to do to pass?”

There isn’t a passing score. The higher your score, the better your chances of admission (and financial aid) at more prestigious schools.

For example, let’s say you wanted to go to school in Chicago:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>75% LSAT</th>
<th>25% LSAT</th>
<th>75% GPA</th>
<th>25% GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePaul</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Kent</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Marshall</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can you find out what LSAT scores you need?

First question: Where do you have a good chance of being admitted?

The results...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akron</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California-Davis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California-Hastings</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California-Los Angeles</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Western</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be extremely difficult to “beat the numbers” by any significant amount.

Most students apply to 5-10 law schools. Apply to a mix of “safe” and “reach” schools.
• The LSAT in Law School Admissions
  
  • What’s On the Exam?
  
  • How Should You Prepare?
What’s on the test?

Four 35-minute *scored sections*

- Logical Reasoning
- Logical Reasoning
- Analytical Reasoning / Logic Games
- Reading Comprehension

Two 35-minute *unscored sections*

- Experimental Section (not identified or identifiable)
- Writing Sample

All told, the LSAT takes roughly 5-6 hours including registration and administration.
Reading Comprehension

Like the ACT/SAT, except way harder.

• 4 passages covering hard and soft sciences as well as the arts

• 26-28 total questions

• The challenge: answer choices are cleverly designed for you to get them wrong

• Significantly harder than 5 years ago
Logical reasoning

Half of your total LSAT score (!)

• 2 scored sections, 24-26 questions of (generally) progressive difficulty

• A variety of challenges, such as:
  • Strengthen the argument
  • Weaken the argument
  • Resolve a paradox
  • Find the logical flaw

• Requires understanding not just of everyday or “informal” logic but also basic formal or symbolic logic
Logical reasoning

John never does the dishes. He always ignores them or waits for someone else to do them. This may represent self-involvement or mere laziness, but in either case I don’t think John will make a good husband for Susan.

Which of the following is an assumption on which the argument depends?
Logical reasoning

John never does the dishes. He always ignores them or waits for someone else to do them. This may represent self-involvement or mere laziness, but in either case I don’t think John will make a good husband for Susan.

Which of the following is an assumption on which the argument depends?
Logic Games

How does a simple question about dinosaur toys turn into this?

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
R & M & M & \_ & \_ \\
S & \_ & \_ & \_ & \_ \\
\end{array}
\]

\[ (G, M, R, Y) \]

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
I & \rightarrow & G \\
L & \rightarrow & I \\
P & \rightarrow & Y \\
T & \rightarrow & U \\
S & \rightarrow & V \\
U & \rightarrow & \emptyset \\
L \text{ and } U & \rightarrow & \text{at least one not M}
\end{array}
\]
Make a basic diagram and illustrate the rules

Sample Test Game #1
Basic setup: you are required to order 5 digits, digits 0-4.

0, 1, 2, 3, 4 = 5

-- each only once
-- 2\textsuperscript{nd} = 2 \times 1\textsuperscript{st}
-- 3\textsuperscript{rd} < 5\textsuperscript{th}
Make inferences – limited options

0, 1, 2, 3, 4 = 5

-- each only once
-- 2\textsuperscript{nd} = 2 \times 1\textsuperscript{st}
-- 3\textsuperscript{rd} < 5\textsuperscript{th}

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
0 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
2 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array}
\]
More inferences...

0, 1, 2, 3, 4 = 5

-- each only once
-- 2\textsuperscript{nd} = 2 \times 1\textsuperscript{st}
-- 3\textsuperscript{rd} < 5\textsuperscript{th}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0/3</th>
<th>3/4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite students’ initial horror, Logic Games is the easiest section on which to improve.
Writing Sample

The writing sample is not formally scored and is therefore the least important section on the exam

• 1 writing prompt with two clear choices

• Quick tips:
  • Write like a high school essay
  • Make a very clear decision between the two options
  • Make sure to fill most of the space
  • Only use words you know how to use and spell

• One practice essay is generally sufficient preparation for the writing sample
• The LSAT in Law School Admissions

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Step 1: Take a free practice LSAT. How does your score compare to your targets?

http://lsac.org/jd/pdfs/SamplePTJune.pdf
Applying early can have big benefits

Almost all law schools practice “rolling admissions.” There are more seats available in October than there are in February.
What skills do I need to build?

Logic.

Ok, and reading, and time management, and tolerance for pressure.
What materials should I use?

Good question.

• Only use real LSAT questions. This eliminates every book <$20.
• A lot of distinctions without differences in prep materials
• Any reputable prep company will supply you with great material
• The foundation of your prep should be tests from LSAC
How many tests should I take?

Taking full tests or sections under timed conditions is probably the most effective means of studying for the exam.

You wouldn’t consider yourself ready to take the test before you’d worked through at least 15 full tests, with at least 10 of those complete, timed tests.

There are 68 real LSATs released, ~40 of which are useful.
How many times should you take the LSAT?

Once.

You should absolutely not take the LSAT unprepared to “see how you do.” That’s the function of free diagnostic exams taken at home.

Most law schools officially accept the highest LSAT score; however, they see all the scores. Consider a student with a single sitting of 160 versus a student with a 143, 157, and 160.

Further, students are permitted to take the exam only three times in a two-year period. (it is now very hard to get an exemption).
Will you improve on a retake?

Students improve an average of 2-3 points on retakes, according to LSAC data.

You should consider retaking the exam if:

- You were unprepared for the exam (avoid this outcome)
- Something disastrous happened on the day of the exam (mis-bubbled, had the flu, etc.)
- You scored 3+ points lower than the average of your last 3 practice exam scores
- You can point to a specific deficiency in your LSAT prep (only studied with bargain LSAT prep books, did not understand formal logic, etc.)
Ideal Prep Calendars

Most students take 3-4 months to prepare for the exam.

- 5+ months is too long – you will run out of material
- Less than a month is not enough time to reach your top score

As of today, there is still ample time to prepare for the October LSAT if you will apply to school this year to start in 2014.

If you are applying for 2015, plan to take the LSAT in June of 2014.
A basic 3-month study plan

If you are working with a tutor or taking a course, a professional will recommend a study plan for you.

If you are studying on your own, consider the following outline:

Month 1:
- Take a diagnostic exam; purchase prep books and at least 20 past LSATs
- Work through methodology material
- Work through many untimed sections

Month 2:
- Review methodology books when necessary
- Take timed preptests
- Review preptests thoroughly

Month 3:
- Take several complete preptests every week
- Review preptests thoroughly
## LSAT Prep Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Study</th>
<th>Prep Course</th>
<th>One-on-One Tutoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lowest price (~$200)</td>
<td>• Generally good materials</td>
<td>• Study plan completely tailored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-paced</td>
<td>• Schedules keep students on pace</td>
<td>• Help identifying and fixing weak areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Focus on need areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Work on concepts until you understand them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Roughly 50% of test-takers report self-study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hard to know what you don’t know</td>
<td>• Lack of personal attention</td>
<td>• Costs more than self-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Few resources to answer questions</td>
<td>• Valuable time devoted to unnecessary areas</td>
<td>• Fewer contact hours than a course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Score plateaus</td>
<td>• High cost-to-value ratio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Registering for the LSAT

• Register for your chosen test center early (especially in major metro areas)

• Fees include:
  • LSAT Registration $160
  • Credential Assembly Service $155
  • Late Registration $69
  • Test Center Change $35

http://lsac.org/JD/LSAT/test-dates-deadlines.asp
Top 10 Tips

1. Set attainable goals and set a study plan
2. Take the exam early
3. Consider prep options carefully
4. Understand logic games diagramming
5. Master basic formal logic
6. Understand the basic structure and mechanisms of arguments
7. Predict answers
8. Get comfortable with process of elimination
9. Practice smart
10. Prepare for Test Day
Resources

- http://lsac.org/
- www.amazon.com
Questions about the LSAT or LSAT Preparation?

You’re welcome to contact John Rood:

John Rood
john@nextsteptestprep.com
773-257-3391
www.nextsteptestprep.com
Interested in LSAT Preparation Suggestions?

Contact MSU Law Admissions for a free copy of our eight-page guide:

admiss@law.msu.edu

or

517-432-0222
Road Map for Law School: Expert Advice for Those Considering Law School

Wednesday, April 24, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., EST

Daralyn Gordon Arata
Pre-law Advisor at Kansas State University

Gregory Shaffer
Coordinator of Pre-law Advising at the University of Maryland at College Park

Charles Roboski
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Michigan State University College of Law
Additional Online Events – Summer and Fall 2013

• Crafting an Effective Personal Statement
• 10 Tips for Strengthening Your Law School Application
• An Insider’s Guide to the Law School Admissions and Financial Aid Process
• Spartan Strong: an Introduction to Michigan State Law
• Meet the Lawyers (MSU Law Career Panels)
• Developing Your Financial Plan for Law School

To receive an invitations to these events, email MSU Law Admissions at admiss@law.msu.edu