

HEALTH PROFESSIONS AND PRELAW CENTER

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HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION FOR LAW SCHOOL

Students in high school can do a number of things to prepare themselves for law school. While in high school (and college), they should develop skills in writing, analysis, critical thinking, and research. They should develop a broad understanding of the world around them, and they should investigate the realities of a legal career.

For high school students, the most useful courses are those which encourage precise writing and organized research, as well as critical examination of the writing of others. Courses which help students build vocabulary and become familiar with libraries are also helpful.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of developing strong writing skills. To begin with, the ability to write clearly and persuasively helps students perform well on the essay exams that are given in most college liberal arts courses. Posting high grades in college allows students a wider choice among law schools when it is time to apply. Further, in most law school courses, especially during the first year, grading is based solely on a single essay exam given at the end of each semester; doing well depends on the ability to write well. The bar examination, which every law school graduate must pass to practice law, is at least half essay in every state. Finally, in a law practice, researching relevant law and preparing written memos, briefs, or transactions occupies nearly all of a lawyer's time. It is only a popular myth that lawyers spend most of their time arguing cases before judges and juries. Success in law is more often contingent on strong, persuasive writing than on persuasive speaking.

High school students will find any subject which makes students investigate and question the way in which human behavior and institutions interact helpful—for example, sociology, political science, psychology, economics, history, and anthropology, among others. Science, mathematics, logic, philosophy, and computer science also help develop logical and analytical thought processes useful to the successful practice of law. Students should take classes such as these in high school if available, and definitely while in college.

Although it is great for students to have an idea of what career they may want to pursue, it is certainly not necessary to choose a career path now, or to stick to that idea through college. Use the college years to explore many different courses of study and career options. Students should make sure to plan a college schedule that will allow them to pursue another career, if law school is not the final choice. The hints in this sheet are useful for any high school students planning to go on to college, whether or not they go on to another three years of law school. Careful high school preparation and the development of good study habits will help prepare students for superior college performance, a significant factor in law school admission. A challenging high school curriculum which offers a well-rounded education is the most effective preparation for aspiring law students.

SUGGESTED READING MATERIALS

LAW SCHOOLS AND LEGAL EDUCATION

Bell, Susan J. *Full Disclosure: Do You Really Want to Be a Lawyer?*

Dworkin, Elizabeth, et. al., *Becoming a Lawyer: A Humanistic Perspective on Legal Education and Professionalism.*

Gillers, Stephen, ed. *Looking at Law School: A Student Guide from the Society of American Law Teachers. So You Want To Be a Lawyer: A Practical Guide.* rev. ed. Law School Admissions Council

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Thinking About Law School: A Minority Guide. rev. ed. Law School Admissions Council.

Llewellyn, Karl N. *The Bramble Bush: On Our Law and its Study.*

Mayfield, Craig K. *Reading Skills for Law Students.*

LEGAL PROFESSION

Walt Bachman, *Law v. Life: What Lawyers are Afraid to Say about the Legal Profession*

F. Lee Bailey, *To Be a Trial Lawyer*

Benjamin Nathan Cardozo, *The Nature of the Judicial Process*

Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire*

Jonathan Harr, *A Civil Action*

Martin Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law*

Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Broken Contract : A Memoir of Harvard Law School*

David Kairys, *The Politics of Law: A Progressive Critique*

Michael J. Kelly, *Lives of Lawyers: Journeys in the Organizations of Practice*

Barbara Kingsolver, *Pigs in Heaven*

Arthur Kinoy, *Rights on Trial: The Odyssey of a People's Lawyer*

Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America 's Struggle for Equality*

Anthony Kronman, *The Lost Lawyer: Failing Ideals of the Legal Profession*

Edward H. Levi, *Introduction to Legal Reasoning*

Anthony Lewis, *Gideon's Trumpet*

Sol M. Linowitz, *The Betrayed Profession: Lawyering at the End of the Twentieth Century*

Richard W. Moll, *The Lure of the Law: Why People Become Lawyers, and What the Profession Does to Them*

Benjamin Sells, *The Soul of the Law*

Gerry Spence, *With Justice for None*

James B. Stewart, *The Partners*

Gerald M. Stern, *The Buffalo Creek Disaster*

Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing? And Other Essays on Law, Morals and the Environment*

Cameron Stracher, *Double Billing: A Young Lawyer's Tale of Greed, Sex, Lies, and the Pursuit of a Swivel Chair*

Jeffrey Toobin, *Too Close to Call: The Thirty-Six-Day Battle to Decide the Election of 2000*

Scott Turow, *1-L*

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We encourage you to use e-mail to ask questions, check your recommendations, and to communicate with our prelaw advisors. Send e-mail to an individual prelaw advisor or to udivhpp@indiana.edu. Please check the HPPLC Web Site for notices of upcoming meetings, campus visitations, and other items of interest.

[This document has been prepared for Indiana University - Bloomington students by the Health Professions and Prewlaw Center. Please note that specific requirements and policies can change at any time without notice. Students are responsible for obtaining the most current information directly from the application services, schools, and programs in which they have an

interest.]