

HACU, HBCU, AND TCU PRELAW ADVISORS THE LSAT DEEP DIVE

NEW ORLEANS
JANUARY 25, 2016

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DEVELOPMENT

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION COUNCIL



OVERVIEW

- LSAT purpose
- LSAT format and content
- How to prepare

PURPOSE OF THE LSAT

- To provide a standard measure of the acquired reasoning and reading skills of law school applicants
- To contribute information useful in making admission decisions

LSAT FORMAT

- 3½ hours long
- 4 scored multiple-choice sections (35 minutes each)
- Total of 100-102 scored multiple-choice questions
- 1 unscored multiple-choice section (35 minutes)
- 1 unscored writing sample (35 minutes)

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT SCORES

Scores range from
120 – 180
(the average is
about 150).

There is no
penalty for
guessing.

There is no
pass/fail score.

The average
number correct is
about 58.

TYPES OF LSAT QUESTIONS

Reading Comprehension (RC):

- 1 section, about 26–28 questions

Logical Reasoning (LR):

- 2 sections, about 24–26 questions each

Analytical Reasoning (AR):

- 1 section, about 22–24 questions

READING COMPREHENSION (RC)

- Read one complex passage ... OR
 - two related passages—Comparative Reading (CR)
- About 450–500 words in total
- Answer 5–8 questions
- 4 RC sets per test
- Variety of topics:
Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, Law Related

SAMPLE RC PASSAGE

The jury trial is one of the handful of democratic institutions that allow individual citizens, rather than the government, to make important societal decisions. A crucial component of the jury trial, at least in serious criminal cases, is the rule that verdicts be unanimous among the jurors (usually twelve in number). Under this requirement, dissenting jurors must either be convinced of the rightness of the prevailing opinion, or, conversely, persuade the other jurors to change their minds. In either instance, the unanimity requirement compels the jury to deliberate fully and truly before reaching its verdict. Critics of the unanimity requirement, however, see it as a costly relic that extends the deliberation process and sometimes, in a hung (i.e., deadlocked) jury, brings it to a halt at the hands of a single, recalcitrant juror, forcing the judge to order a retrial. Some of these critics recommend reducing verdict requirements to something less than unanimity, so that one or even two dissenting jurors will not be able to force a retrial.

But the material costs of hung juries do not warrant losing the benefit to society of the unanimous verdict. Statistically, jury trials are relatively rare; the vast majority of defendants do not have the option of a jury trial or elect to have a trial without a jury—or they plead guilty to the original or a reduced charge. And the incidence of hung juries is only a small fraction of the already small fraction of cases that receive a jury trial.

Furthermore, that juries occasionally deadlock does not demonstrate a flaw in the criminal justice system, but rather suggests that jurors are conscientiously doing the job they have been asked to do. Hung juries usually occur when the case is very close—that is, when neither side has presented completely convincing evidence—and although the unanimity requirement may sometimes lead to inconclusive outcomes, a hung jury is certainly preferable to an unjust verdict.

Requiring unanimity provides a better chance that a trial, and thus a verdict, will be fair. Innocent people are already occasionally convicted—perhaps in some cases because jurors presume that anyone who has been brought to trial is probably guilty—and eliminating the unanimity requirement would only increase the opportunity for such mistakes. Furthermore, if a juror's dissenting opinion can easily be dismissed, an important and necessary part of the deliberation process will be lost, for effective deliberation requires that each juror's opinion be given a fair hearing. Only then can the verdict reached by the jury be said to represent all of its members, and if even one juror has doubts that are dismissed out of hand, society's confidence that a proper verdict has been reached would be undermined.

SAMPLE COMPARATIVE READING PASSAGE

The following passages were adapted from articles published in the mid-1990s.

Passage A

In January 1995 a vast section of ice broke off the Larsen ice shelf in Antarctica. While this occurrence, the direct result of a regional warming trend that began in the 1940s, may be the most spectacular manifestation yet of serious climate changes occurring on the planet as a consequence of atmospheric heating, other symptoms—more intense storms, prolonged droughts, extended heat waves, and record flooding—have been emerging around the world for several years.

According to scientific estimates, furthermore, sea-level rise resulting from global warming will reach 3 feet (1 meter) within the next century. Such a rise could submerge vast coastal areas, with potentially irreversible consequences.

Late in 1995 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that it had detected the "fingerprint" of human activity as a contributor to the warming of the earth's atmosphere. Furthermore, panel scientists attributed such warming directly to the increasing quantities of carbon dioxide released by our burning of fossil fuels. The IPCC report thus clearly identifies a pattern of climatic response to human activities in the climatological record, thereby establishing without doubt that global warming can no longer be attributed solely to natural climate variability.

Passage B

Over the past two decades, an extreme view of global warming has developed. While it contains some facts, this view also

contains exaggerations and misstatements, and has sometimes resulted in unreasonable environmental policies.

According to this view, global warming will cause the polar ice to melt, raising global sea levels, flooding entire regions, destroying crops, and displacing millions of people. However, there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding a potential rise in sea levels. Certainly, if the earth warms, sea levels will rise as the water heats up and expands. If the polar ice caps melt, more water will be added to the oceans, raising sea levels even further. There is some evidence that melting has occurred; however, there is also evidence that the Antarctic ice sheets are growing. In fact, it is possible that a warmer sea-surface temperature will cause more water to evaporate, and when wind carries the moisture-laden air over the land, it will precipitate out as snow, causing the ice sheets to grow. Certainly, we need to have better knowledge about the hydrological cycle before predicting dire consequences as a result of recent increases in global temperatures.

This view also exaggerates the impact that human activity has on the planet. While human activity may be a factor in global warming, natural events appear to be far more important. The 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines, for example, caused a decrease in the average global temperature, while El Niño, a periodic perturbation in the ocean's temperature and circulation, causes extreme global climatic events, including droughts and major flooding. Of even greater importance to the earth's climate are variations in the sun's radiation and in the earth's orbit. Climate variability has always existed and will continue to do so, regardless of human intervention.

WHAT RC QUESTIONS MIGHT ASK

Which one of the following most accurately expresses the main point of the passage?

Which one of the following can be inferred from the passage?

The author of the passage is most likely to agree with which one of the following statements?

Which one of the following principles is operative in the author's argument?

WHAT COMPARATIVE READING (CR) QUESTIONS MIGHT ASK

Which one of the following is a topic that is central to both passages?

The authors would be most likely to agree about which one of the following?

Which one of the following most accurately characterizes the relationship between the two passages?

RC STRATEGIES



- Read each passage carefully.



- Try to identify the main point and the author's point of view.



- Keep contrasting points of view straight.



- Try to see implications of the passage.



- Should you read the questions first?

LOGICAL REASONING (LR)

- Short argumentative passages (20–100 words)
- 1 question about each passage (occasionally 2)
- About 25 questions per LR section; about 50 per test
- Variety of topics and formats

NO SPECIALIZED TRAINING IN LOGIC IS NEEDED

But you should understand some basic terms:

- argument
- premise
- inference
- conclusion
- assumption

Pay attention to quantifier and indicator words:

- some, all, every, many, most, usually, none, ...
- therefore, thus, since, probably, because, ...

LR STRATEGIES

- 
- Identify the premises and conclusion of the argument.

- 
- Answer the questions only on the basis of the information given, not on the basis of outside information or opinions.

- 
- Judge the responses by how well they answer the question that is asked.

SAMPLE LR

Dietitian:

High consumption of sodium increases some people's chances of developing heart disease. To maintain cardiac health without lowering sodium consumption, therefore, these people should eat fresh, rather than canned or frozen, fruit and vegetables, since the potassium in plant foods helps to prevent sodium's malign effects.

PREMISES AND CONCLUSION

Dietitian:

High consumption of sodium increases some people's chances of developing heart disease. To maintain cardiac health without lowering sodium consumption, therefore, these people should eat fresh, rather than canned or frozen, fruit and vegetables, since the potassium in plant foods helps to prevent sodium's malign effects.

Which one of the following is an assumption required by the dietitian's argument?

(A) Fresh fruits and vegetables contain more potassium than sodium.

(B) Food processing businesses often add sodium to foods being canned or frozen.

(C) Potassium is the only mineral that helps to prevent sodium's malign effects.

(D) Potassium in fruits and vegetables has few negative side effects.

(E) Fresh fruits and vegetables contain more potassium than do canned or frozen ones.

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(D) Potassium in fruits and vegetables has few negative side effects.

(E) Fresh fruits and vegetables contain more potassium than do canned or frozen ones.

OTHER SORTS OF LR QUESTIONS

Which one of the following is the overall conclusion of the argument?

Which one of the following is most strongly supported by the statements above?

The argument commits which one of the following errors of reasoning?

Which one of the following, if true, most strengthens the argument?

ANALYTICAL REASONING (AR)

- Read a passage of up to 120 words that describes a scenario and a set of rules that apply to it.
- Answer 5-7 questions about what can or must be the case.
- The scenarios involve various kinds of relationships, such as:
 - above, next to
 - before, after
 - group membership
- Four AR sets per test section

SAMPLE AR PASSAGE

Exactly six guideposts, numbered 1 through 6, mark a mountain trail. Each guidepost pictures a different one of six animals—fox, grizzly, hare, lynx, moose, or porcupine. The following conditions must apply:

The grizzly is pictured on either guidepost 3 or guidepost 4.

The moose guidepost is numbered lower than the hare guidepost.

The lynx guidepost is numbered lower than the moose guidepost but higher than the fox guidepost.

EXAMPLES OF AR QUESTIONS

Which one of the following could be true?

Which one of the following must be true?

Which one of the following animals **CANNOT** be the one pictured on guidepost 3?

If guidepost 5 does not picture the moose, then which one of the following must be true?

AR STRATEGIES

- Read the passage and questions carefully and literally. (*immediately after, at some time after*)
- Sketch out tables or diagrams where helpful, and use abbreviations. (“F” for fox)
- Make your own shorthand versions of the rules. For example: “**G3 or G4,**” “**M < H**”
- Pay close attention to words like *only, exactly, except, not, must be, cannot be*.
- Pay close attention to **conditional** statements (“if, then”).

THE WRITING EXERCISE

- Decide between alternative courses of action using given criteria.
- Not scored by LSAC.
- Completed exercise (writing sample) is sent to law schools for their use in evaluating applicants.
- 35 minutes

OVERVIEW

- ✓ LSAT purpose
- ✓ LSAT format and content
- ✓ How to prepare

DISPELLING MYTHS

- Our questions are not designed to “trick” people.
- The right answer is *not* usually C.
- The LSAT is not scored on a curve.
- There is no special “LSAT logic.”
- There are no special meanings of words on the LSAT.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE LSAT: WHAT TO TELL STUDENTS

- Long term
 - Students are already preparing by completing an undergraduate degree.
 - Students should take challenging courses that develop skills tested by the LSAT.
- Short term
 - Students should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the test.

PREP COURSE OR NOT?

**Self-
preparation
is effective.**

- Test prep companies want you to believe otherwise.
- Begin long before intended test date.

**If you decide
to take a
prep course:**

- Assess your needs before choosing a course.
- Make sure the course uses actual LSATs.

HOW CAN STUDENTS PREPARE ON THEIR OWN?

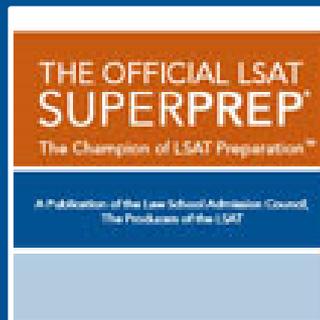
- Take practice tests.
- Visit www.lsac.org for free prep material
 - Sample Questions with Explanations
 - A disclosed LSAT from June 2007
- More disclosed tests and other prep material is available for purchase.

AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE



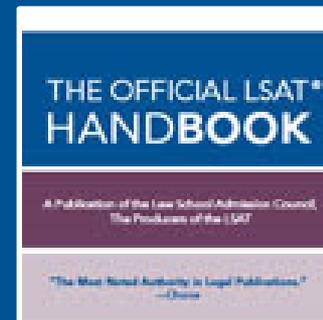
PrepTests

- actual LSATs, sold individually or in groups of 10



The Official LSAT SuperPrep

- 3 full LSATs with every question fully explained



The LSAT Handbook

- An in-depth guide to question types, but no tests

METHOD LSAC RECOMMENDS FOR BEST PREPARATION

- Take 1 or 2 tests—not timed.
- Get used to the question types.
- Identify strengths.
- Identify what you find more difficult.
- Focus on types of questions you find difficult.
- Review questions you got wrong; make sure you understand why.

NEXT STEP IN PREPARATION

- Take individual sections under timed conditions (35 min).
- Focus more on sections that are the most difficult (if any).
- Keep reviewing questions student got wrong.

SIMULATE THE REAL THING

- Take whole tests under timed conditions.
- Check conversion chart to calculate “score.”
- Work through as many whole tests as possible:
 - Work out optimal pace
 - Know when to stick with a hard question and when to move on
 - Build mental stamina
 - Feel more confident

HOW LONG SHOULD STUDENT PLAN TO SPEND PREPARING?

Suggestions:

- ✓ Until none of the question types seem new
- ✓ Until you student feels able to manage your time well
- ✓ Until working through a test section becomes “second nature”

REACH YOUR POTENTIAL

Aim for
success, not
perfection.

- You can score well even with many wrong answers.
- You don't need to get to every question (but don't leave any answers blank).

Be your best
on test day.

- Arrive well rested.
- Avoid unnecessary stress.

THANK YOU!

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