

## How can I learn more about the legal profession?

You can learn firsthand about lawyer's duties by observing trials at your local courthouse or by discussing with a lawyer his or her daily activities. Your high school also may have law-related education courses or activities. Consider volunteer work involving counseling and assisting people to test your abilities to deal with other people's problems.

Online resources for those contemplating a law career include:

State Bar of Texas, [www.texasbar.com](http://www.texasbar.com)  
American Bar Association, [www.abanet.org](http://www.abanet.org)  
Law School Admissions Council, [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)

Check your local library for these and other helpful books on the legal profession.

Arron, Deborah. *What Can You Do With A Law Degree? A Lawyer's Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside & Around the Law*, Niche Press, 1999.

Cassidy, Carol-June and Goldfarb, Sally F. *Inside the Law Schools: A Guide by Students, for Students*, New York, Dutton, 1997.

Hegland, Kenney F. *Introduction to the Study and Practice of Law in a Nutshell*, West Publishing Co., 2000.

Munneke, Gary A. *Barron's Guide to Law Schools*, Rev.ed. Woodbury, New York, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2000.

Burchard & Stein. *How to Study Law and Take Exams in a Nutshell*, West Publishing Co., 1996.

Morgan & Snyder. *The Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*, New York, ABA, 2002.

## Job Options for Lawyers and Law School Graduates

### Positions Practicing Law:

contract (temporary or freelance) lawyer  
department manager  
managing attorney  
managing partner  
non-equity partner  
participating attorney  
partner  
partnership-track associate  
of counsel  
public, pro bono or public service counsel  
referral attorney  
staff attorney  
special counsel

### Areas of Practice:

administrative  
adoption  
agricultural  
alternative-dispute resolution  
antitrust  
appellate  
banking  
bankruptcy  
biomedical issues  
bond  
business organization  
commercial finance  
commercial litigation  
commercial banking  
communications  
computer  
constitutional  
construction  
copyright  
corporate  
corporate reorganization  
disciplinary action by licensing boards  
discrimination  
domestic relations  
elder  
employee benefits  
employment  
employment relations  
energy  
entertainment  
environmental  
estate planning  
family  
franchising  
general practice  
governmental relations/  
lobbying  
guardianship

health care  
immigration  
insurance  
insurance defense  
intellectual property  
international finance  
international  
labor  
litigation  
lobbying  
matrimonial  
mergers & acquisitions  
natural resources  
patent  
pensions  
probate  
public contracts  
public utility  
real estate  
social security  
sports  
taxation  
trademark  
transportation  
trust  
workers' compensation

### Law-Related Positions:

client services manager  
director of business development  
director of client relations  
director of management and legal information services  
director of practice development  
director of professional development  
director of training (clerical/paralegal)  
firm manager  
in-house corporate communications  
in-house editor  
law firm administrator  
law librarian  
legal assistant manager  
marketing manager  
paralegal/legal assistant  
personnel director  
professional development training officer  
public relations director  
recruiting administrator  
director  
strategic planner

For specific information and requirements of a particular law school in Texas, contact that school's Admissions Office at the address listed below.

Baylor School of Law  
1114 S. University Parks Dr.  
Waco, TX 76706  
254-710-1911  
[law.baylor.edu](http://law.baylor.edu)

Southern Methodist University  
Dedman School of Law  
P.O. Box 750110  
Dallas, TX 75275-0110  
214-768-2550  
[www.law.smu.edu](http://www.law.smu.edu)

South Texas College of Law  
1303 San Jacinto  
Houston, TX 77002  
713-646-1810  
[www.stcl.edu](http://www.stcl.edu)

St. Mary's University  
School of Law  
One Camino Santa Maria  
San Antonio, TX 78228  
210-436-3523  
<http://stmarylaw.stmarytx.edu>

Texas Southern University  
Thurgood Marshall  
School of Law  
3100 Cleburne  
Houston, TX 77004  
713-313-7114  
[www.tsulaw.edu](http://www.tsulaw.edu)

Texas Tech University  
School of Law  
1802 Hartford  
Lubbock, TX 79409  
806-742-3985  
[www.law.ttu.edu](http://www.law.ttu.edu)

Texas Wesleyan University  
School of Law  
Office of Admissions  
1515 Commerce  
Fort Worth, TX 76102-6509  
817-212-4040  
[www.law.txwes.edu](http://www.law.txwes.edu)

University of Houston  
Law Center  
Office of Admissions  
100 Law Center  
Houston, TX 77204-6060  
713-743-2100  
[www.law.uh.edu](http://www.law.uh.edu)

University of Texas  
School of Law  
727 East Dean Keeton St.  
Austin, TX 78705-3299  
512-232-1200  
[www.utexas.edu/law](http://www.utexas.edu/law)

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P.O. Box 12487  
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[www.texasbar.com](http://www.texasbar.com)



# Becoming A Lawyer

*Law is a popular vocational choice for many Americans. To help compare your career goals with the demands of a law career, here are answers to ten frequently asked questions about the legal profession.*

## What does a lawyer do?

Working as a lawyer means helping individuals and businesses solve legal problems, understand regulatory matters, and help make business or personal decisions. A lawyer may assist in drafting a will, help a merchant collect overdue bills, advise someone seeking a divorce, answer questions about new federal broadcast regulations, defend a person being accused of a crime, or assist a corporate executive in researching tax law and international trade. Today's lawyer has many roles and activities based on his or her interests.

## What are the education and licensing requirements to be a lawyer?

Seven years of education following high school is typically required to obtain a law degree: four years of undergraduate school and three years of law school. Law schools generally require a bachelor's degree for admission. A law graduate with a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from a law school approved by the American Bar Association must then take the bar examination, which is a comprehensive test of knowledge in many areas of law. After passing this test, the person is licensed to practice law. Both applicants to law school and candidates for the bar exam are screened by the Texas Board of Law Examiners ([www.ble.state.tx.us](http://www.ble.state.tx.us)) for qualifications and standards of moral character.

## As an undergraduate, should I take certain types of courses?

Many law schools recommend the broadest possible undergraduate education. There is no required or suggested course of study for pre-law students. A legal education is so different from everything which precedes it that no one course (such as business law) will prepare you for it, but any course which stimulates your thinking or gives you insights into some of the legal questions lawyers must face is beneficial. Choose an undergraduate major with ample career alternatives should your law

career plans later change. Consider courses that develop organized thinking, a command of the English language, both written and spoken, and the ability to work well with others. The self-discipline and study habits required in law should be developed in undergraduate courses. Do not choose the least demanding courses for a high grade point average at the expense of achieving valuable learning skills.

## What are the entrance requirements to law school?

Admission is usually based on undergraduate class standing and scores on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Many schools also will consider other factors, such as letters of recommendation, student leadership activities, work experience, community involvement, and extracurricular activities. Applying to law school and taking the LSAT should be completed at least eight months, and up to one year, before enrollment.

## How do I choose a law school?

Base your selection on your individual needs. Location is a factor if you prefer to attend school in the state or city where you intend to practice. Cost considerations may influence your choice of an out-of-state public school or a private school where tuition will be higher than in-state schools. If you are accepted by more than one school, consider the comparative public reputations of the schools, since reputation may affect demand for graduates with employers.

## How much will law school cost?

Tuition and fees for law school may range from \$1,500 to \$12,000 per semester for a full-time student. Total cost varies per institution, and whether it is a public or private school. Tuition fees are subject to change. Check with the Admissions Office for the current tuition fees for the school you wish to attend. Books average \$500 to \$750 for each semester of law school. Financial aid, work/study programs, and state or federally-funded student loan programs are available. Other sources of aid may include local bar association scholarships or private scholarship funds created to assist law students. Some schools also provide special programs for minority students. Investigate financial assistance when asking for admissions information.

## What career options are available?

**Private Practice** means practicing law in your own firm or associating with a firm that employs hundreds of attorneys. The private practitioner may be a trial lawyer, or engaged in an office practice, which includes preparing contracts, deeds, wills, and other legal documents and giving written opinions and advice to a client. The attorney in a small firm often must be a "jack of all trades" in order to take a broad variety of cases. Attorneys in large firms often specialize in areas such as income tax law, patent and trademark law, oil and gas law, and labor law. Starting salaries are often higher in larger firms, and the security afforded by large corporate clients is attractive. But the freedom and independence of the small practice, with its close client contact, also has advantages.

**Corporate Law** usually means working in the law department of a large business, performing legal work as varied as the activities of the company. If the company has diverse interests and the counsel staff is large, attorneys may specialize just as in a large law firm.

**Government Employment** at the federal, state or local level involves such activities as hearings conducted by regulatory agencies, prosecuting criminal defendants, representing a government agency in court, drafting regulations or ordinances, and evaluating the legal aspects of policy and other decisions by a governing body or its chief administrator.

**Public Interest** law is the effort to provide representation to people and interests that historically have been unrepresented or underrepresented in the legal process. These include the poor and others without access to courts, administrative agencies, and other forums where decisions affecting them are made. The most visible "public interest" law office in Texas is the local legal aid program; however, there are other programs.

**Judiciary** offers the opportunity to serve the public as a municipal, state or federal judge and preside over criminal and civil court proceedings.

**Academic Positions** include teaching law and law-related courses, such as law enforcement, business law, and real estate law at universities and colleges. Other academic positions include law librarians, editors, and administrators.

**Military Service** in armed services' legal offices may provide a variety of legal experiences and an opportunity to live in many places. Like private practice, military legal offices may be small or large and may offer an opportunity to gain experience in specialty areas.

**Other opportunities** in fields such as journalism, industry, advertising, banking, politics, administration, and accounting exist for law school graduates.

Some graduates may choose to work in these fields immediately and later practice law, while others will move to these areas after initially practicing law.

## What are my chances of getting hired after graduation?

Job hunting is always competitive because approximately 3,000 new lawyers are licensed in Texas each year. Opportunities vary from area to area, with the most attractive openings having many applicants. The strongest competition for job openings is in large cities, while smaller towns tend to offer more opportunity. Graduates should consider a full range of employment options to be successful in their job search.

## Can I be involved in law-related work without a license to practice law?

An individual cannot give legal advice, offer representation in court, or handle many other legal matters without a license to practice law in Texas. However, many tasks traditionally performed by lawyers are now done by legal assistants supervised by and responsible to lawyers. Paralegal education and training courses are offered at several Texas colleges and universities and other institutions. A list of these schools is available from the State Bar of Texas Legal Assistants Division. Law-related job areas that do not require a license include trust work at banks, public administration, law enforcement and criminal justice, and judicial administration.