



## **About the Law School Admission Test (LSAT)**

We at LSAC understand that you are often asked by potential applicants to law school about the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). This short document should help you answer applicant questions. The information provided in this communiqué is presented in a frequently-asked-question format. There is more information that we could provide, and you may have more questions. You are encouraged to contact the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) at 215.968.1251 or email us at [lsatts@LSAC.org](mailto:lsatts@LSAC.org) should you have questions not answered here.

### **1. How many times can someone take the LSAT?**

Test takers can take the LSAT up to three times in two years. If a test taker has taken the LSAT three times within two years, it is still possible to take the test again after the two-year period has elapsed.

### **2. If a student takes the LSAT more than once, do the law schools to which the student applies see all the scores or only the highest score?**

All scores an applicant received within the previous five years are reported to the law school. Many schools rely on the highest score for their admission decisions. Applicants should check with the law schools they are interested in to learn what their policies are with respect to multiple LSAT scores.

### **3. Are some LSAT administrations harder than others?**

No. All LSATs are constructed to be equal in difficulty regardless of when they are administered. Scores on the LSAT are reported on a scale of 120 to 180 and can be compared across testing administrations and testing years. Test scores have the same meaning from one test administration to the next and from one year to the next as a result of a process called *equating*. When scores are equated, a given scaled score represents comparable ability regardless of when the student takes the test.

### **4. What does the LSAT test?**

The LSAT assesses the kinds of verbal reasoning skills that have been shown to be critical for success in law school. The current makeup of the test (comprised of Reading Comprehension, Logical Reasoning, and Analytical Reasoning question types) was arrived at through continual refinements to the test conducted over its long history with early input from law faculty. The first LSAT was administered in 1948.

## **5. What is tested in each question type?**

### Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension questions assess the ability to read, with understanding and insight, examples of lengthy and complex materials similar to those commonly encountered in law school. Law school and the practice of law revolve around extensive reading of densely written and argumentative texts. This reading must be careful, distinguishing precisely what is said from what is not said. It involves comparison, analysis, synthesis, and application. It involves drawing appropriate inferences, and applying ideas and arguments to new contexts. Law school reading also requires the ability to grasp unfamiliar subject matter and the ability to process challenging material.

### Logical Reasoning

Logical Reasoning questions assess the ability to analyze, critically evaluate, and complete arguments as they occur in ordinary language. Arguments are a fundamental part of the law and analyzing arguments is a key element of legal analysis. Training in the law builds on a foundation of basic reasoning skills. Law students must draw on these skills in analyzing, evaluating, constructing, and refuting arguments. They need to be able to identify what information is relevant to an issue or argument and what impact further evidence has on it. They need to be able to reconcile opposing positions and use arguments to persuade others.

### Analytical Reasoning

Analytical Reasoning questions assess the ability to consider a group of facts and rules, and—using those facts and rules—determine what could or must be true. These questions require the test taker to organize given information and draw logically certain inferences (or deductive inferences) from that information. These skills are key components of the ability to think critically.

The reasoning skills assessed in Analytical Reasoning parallel those involved in the kind of legal reasoning that is used in law school and the practice of law in understanding and organizing a set of conditions, rules, or regulations and initial conditions, and then proceeding to determine what could or must be the case given that information.

## **6. Is the LSAT unfair or biased?**

There is no evidence that the LSAT is biased against any subgroup. The test development process is designed to ensure that the LSAT is valid, fair, and unbiased. LSAC adheres to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, which defines test bias as skill-irrelevant components of test scores that differentially affect the performance of different groups of test takers.

## **7. Is the Analytical Reasoning section the hardest of the four multiple-choice sections on the LSAT?**

Some test takers find Analytical Reasoning to be harder than Logical Reasoning or Reading Comprehension. This may be because its format is unfamiliar to them. The sections on the LSAT are constructed to be the same in difficulty. LSAC research and test development staff go

to great lengths to ensure that the sections are parallel in this way, and our research shows that the average percent correct in each section is about the same.

### **8. Analytical Reasoning questions are unusual. Are they fair?**

Analytical Reasoning questions are fair. Even though they may seem unfamiliar at first, Analytical Reasoning questions are formatted to give the test taker an everyday situation and then ask the test taker to process the given information to determine what can or must be true in the situation. The test taker does not need to have any training in formal logic or any specialized background knowledge to do well on this section.

Because the format of AR can be unfamiliar, it is particularly important to practice these questions prior to test day to become familiar with these questions. LSAC advises and emphasizes to all prospective test takers the importance of practice prior to the day of the test. LSAC gives extensive guidance on how to approach all LSAT question types, including approaches to solving Analytical Reasoning questions, on LSAC.org and in the publications, *The Official LSAT SuperPrep*, *The Official LSAT SuperPrep II*, and *The Official LSAT Handbook*. These publications are available for purchase at low cost or can be found in libraries. *The Official LSAC SuperPrep II* is provided without charge to test takers who are granted a fee waiver by LSAC.

### **9. Is it true that the LSAT is a measure of socioeconomic status?**

No, the LSAT is not a measure of status.

- The test-development process includes requirements that the test content be fair to all test takers (gender, race and ethnicity, regions of the country, US/Canada), including test takers of all economic backgrounds. These fairness requirements are built into the writing of the test questions and the process by which the test questions are reviewed and approved. The review process also includes both internal and external reviewers. Questions deemed to be unfair are not used on the test. In addition to the question review, questions used on the LSAT are pretested as a further check on question fairness.
- The LSAT is designed to measure specific skills in reading and critical reasoning. Correlation studies conducted over many years demonstrate that LSAT scores predict first-year GPAs more accurately than any other factor, including undergraduate GPA. The predictive validity of the test also supports the success of the test at measuring the skills required to perform well in the first year of law school.
- Some people think that test takers need to enroll in expensive test-prep classes to do well on the LSAT. Although it is important to be familiar with the test format and to practice on actual LSAT questions prior to the day of the test, there are many ways for students to access actual LSAT questions for practice at little or no cost.

### **10. Do I have to take an expensive test-prep course to do well on the LSAT?**

Taking an expensive test-preparation course is not required to do well on the LSAT. LSAC does advise all test takers to practice and to become very familiar with the test prior to taking the LSAT. To help test takers prepare, LSAC publishes thousands of test questions (with answer keys) that have appeared on previously administered LSATs. LSAC publishes thorough explanations of how to solve all the questions on several of these tests. These explanations are developed by the same LSAC test developers who write the test questions. Some of these materials are available for free on LSAC.org, others are available for purchase at low cost.

The best source of evidence we have about methods of preparation, including commercial test-preparation courses, is a survey that appears on the back of the answer sheets used at each test administration. LSAC publishes descriptive summary statistics on the responses to the survey every three years, as well as the average LSAT scores of test takers who utilize each of the various test preparation strategies. The most recent report, from October 2014, is available here: [http://www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/research-\(lsac-resources\)/tr-14-03.pdf](http://www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/research-(lsac-resources)/tr-14-03.pdf). Note that this data is self-reported by the test takers, so it is important to be cautious in drawing conclusions from these surveys.

### **11. How far in advance should a test taker start to prepare for the LSAT?**

There is no single right answer to this question. Much depends on how much time the student has to prepare each week. A full-time student working full-time, or some combination of both, should allow ample time to fit LSAT preparation sessions into their schedule. Test takers without a lot of other demands on their time can start closer to the test date. We generally advise people to prepare until they feel they have satisfied the following guidelines:

- none of the question types that you see in your practice seem new to you;
- you feel you can manage your time well; and
- working through a test section becomes “second nature.”

### **12. Does doing well on the LSAT have anything to do with actual law school work?**

The LSAT is the single best predictor of first-year law school grades, even better than undergraduate GPA. (The best overall prediction comes from combining LSAT score with undergraduate GPA.) Admission professionals use a combination of the LSAT and undergraduate GPA in admission decisions. The LSAT successfully predicts law school performance because the skills it tests are essential to success in law school. There is broad agreement in the legal education community that the skills assessed by the LSAT are directly relevant to law school and the practice of law.