

Pre-Law

The field of law offers a wide range of career options—options that pre-law students should understand and explore. Oberlin College offers the opportunity to explore and expand your options by the very nature of the liberal arts curriculum. By developing the reading, writing, and analytical skills required for law school, Oberlin prepares students for the rigors of a legal career.

There is no single major that is the key to gaining admission to law school. You should choose a major that interests you and challenges you to become a better student. Choosing a major that you find enjoyable will lead to a better education and better preparation for a post-Oberlin career. You should also choose courses that test your logical reasoning ability and your skills in presenting and defending an argument, both orally and in writing. You should not plan your education for the sole purpose of entering law school; doing so will cause you to miss the best of what a liberal arts education has to offer, and you will unintentionally make yourself less attractive to law schools.

If you are interested in law school, look over the courses for the Law and Society major—these classes contain subject matter relevant to law and are helpful in developing the necessary analytical skills. If you know what type of law you wish to pursue, you may find it useful to select courses from a variety of departments (for example, Environmental Studies).

Because the number of applicants for law school has risen significantly over the past few years, admission is more competitive than ever and it is even more competitive for the top law schools. The good news is that Oberlin College graduates who have applied to law school have fared well, with an acceptance rate of 83% over the past five years. Moreover, Oberlin graduates have been accepted at a full range of law schools, including Boston College, Cornell, Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, New York University, Northeastern, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, University of California Berkeley, Vanderbilt, and Yale. Acceptance into law school will depend primarily on your LSAT score and GPA, followed by your personal statement, letters of recommendation, and extracurricular

activities/leadership. Consequently, it is critical that you do well in your classes (the top law schools expect between a 3.5 and 4.0), get involved in student organizations, take on leadership roles, and get to know faculty whom you can ask to write a letter of recommendation. One of the best ways to establish a connection with a faculty member is by taking more than one course taught by that faculty member.

Law schools are more likely to admit an applicant who has thought carefully and realistically about what life as a lawyer will be and about the career options a law degree will offer. You should talk with lawyers – many Oberlin alumni are in the field of law and can be an excellent resource for you. The Office of Career Services at Oberlin can connect you with alumni career mentors. Also read books, legal journals and newspapers. Since nothing can substitute for experiencing first-hand what the practice of law is like, you should do an internship. The Office of Career Services has a number of ways to assist you with winter term or summer internships. Please note that working in the field of law is not a prerequisite for law school, but it can help you decide if law is for you. You should always attempt to visit law schools whenever possible. Ask to sit in on a class, talk to students and visit key departments such as career services, financial aid, and, of course, admissions.

A number of Pre-Law advisors are available to assist you at Oberlin College and are listed in the course catalogue. Faculty and the Office of Career Services work closely together to make sure that the students interested in law get the support they need. All students interested in law are encouraged to contact Career Services in order to be added to the pre-law list of students and receive regular pre-law announcements.

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