

Recommendations and Tips for Prelaw Students
Center for Student Advising
Office of Preprofessional Advising

- Select a major or concentration that interests you. Students tend to do better academically if they like what they are studying.
- Do your very best academically. Grades matter!
- Take a normal to heavy course-load each semester and take only one or two classes pass/fail during your undergraduate career. Know your limits! Don't jeopardize taking too many credits in a semester but challenge yourself.
- Consider courses that sharpen your analytic test-taking skills: economics, probability, logic, and math.
- Demonstrate that you are motivated learner (i.e., enroll in more than the minimum 12 pts. each term, write a thesis if that interests you and is offered by your major department, and take upper-level courses and seminars in your junior and senior years.
- SEAS students and Columbia College science majors should consider asking for a letter of recommendation from a faculty member for whom they had to critique and analyze texts and write papers.
- Get to know faculty members and find a mentor. Law schools typically require two faculty recommendations.
- Subscribe to the prelaw listserv. See our website for instructions.
- Read the prelaw section of our website – www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/preprofessional/law.
- Get involved in co-curricular activities of interest to you. Schools look at depth of involvement and leadership roles versus quantity of activities. Co-curricular activities are an excellent avenue for you to distinguish yourself. Work is also considered a co-curricular activity. **Warning.** Activities will not compensate for poor grades.
- Become involved in community service. There are plentiful opportunities in New York City through Community Impact and organizations outside of Columbia.
- If you think you are interested in public interest law, become fluent in another language(s).
- Read and bookmark www.lisac.org.
- Maintain a clean disciplinary and criminal record.
- Establish a credit history and use credit responsibly as many law students rely on private loans to finance their legal education. Live like a student and don't rack-up credit card debt!
- Begin researching law schools by looking at the *Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* and *Thinking About Law School* at <http://www.lisac.org>. Read *Degrees of Difference: A How-to Guide to Choosing a Law School* by Amy Thompson Briggs or Chapter 5 of *The Ultimate Guide to Law School Admission* by Carol Wright, J.D. You can order the first book from Amazon.com or nalp.org and the second book from bn.com or amazon.com.
- Become familiar with the LSAT. To learn more about the LSAT visit www.lisac.org.

Assess Whether Law School and the Legal Profession Are Right for You

- Read about the law school experience, admissions process, and the legal profession. A suggested reading list is on our website.
- Shadow and discuss legal careers with family members, friends and acquaintances who are attorneys.
- Attend classes at Columbia Law and talk with current law students. Classes that you may observe are listed at http://www.law.columbia.edu/jd_applicants/visiting/attendclasses.
- Conduct informational interviews with attorneys. A tipsheet on informational interviewing can be found at <http://www.cce.columbia.edu/sites/cce/files/NetworkingAlumni.pdf>.
- Attempt to secure an internship that gives you exposure to the legal profession (non-profit organization, government, or law firm). This is not always possible for first-years and sophomores but sometimes it can happen.
- Talk with staff members in the Office of Preprofessional Advising.
- Attend programs sponsored by the Office of Preprofessional Advising.
- Do some soul-searching and self-assessment. Two helpful books are *Should You Really Be A Lawyer* by Deborah Schneider and Gary Belsky and Chapter One of *Law School Confidential* by Robert H. Miller. We also have a copy of each book in our office.



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Center for Student Advising**

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