The LSAT

What's the LSAT all about?

The Law School Admission Test is administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) four times a year at pre-established testing centers, one of which is Purdue Fort Wayne. The test has five 35-minute multiple-choice sections covering logical reasoning (two sections), reading comprehension (one section), analytical reasoning (one section), and a fifth section which is experimental and not graded. Additionally, a 35-minute writing sample is administered at the test’s conclusion which isn’t graded but is sent to the law schools that you have on file with the Law School Data Assembly Service. More information about the LSAT can be found at LSAC.org.

What specific skills are measured in the different sections of the test?

Well, if we take a look here at the Admission Council’s official website, you can see that the reading comprehension questions “measure your ability to read, with understanding and insight, examples of lengthy and complex materials similar to those commonly encountered in law school work. The reading comprehension section contains four sets of reading questions, each consisting of a selection of reading material, followed by five to eight questions that test reading and reasoning abilities.”

Further on you can see that analytical reasoning questions “are designed to measure your ability to understand a structure of relationships and to draw logical conclusions about that structure. You are asked to make deductions from a set of statements, rules, or conditions that describe relationships among entities such as persons, places, things, or events. They simulate the kinds of detailed analyses of relationships that a law student must perform in solving legal problems.”

And finally, the questions on logical reasoning “evaluate your ability to understand, analyze, criticize, and complete a variety of arguments. Each logical reasoning question requires you to read and comprehend a short passage, then answer a question about it. The questions test a variety of abilities involved in reasoning logically and thinking critically.”

How is the test scored?

Scores range from a low of 120 up to a perfect 180. Since there is no penalty for wrong answers, make sure to answer all the questions.
**When’s the best time to take the LSAT?**

Taking the LSAT in the June between your junior and senior years puts you in an ideal position. This allows for more test preparation time after spring term ends and you have opportunities to retake the LSAT if some unaccounted for event keeps you from doing your best. Ultimately, you should take the test when you believe you’re ready, though never without studying for the test. There are a couple of good reasons for this: first, test preparation has been shown to improve test results, and second, your test score affects the median score of all other Purdue Fort Wayne students taking the LSAT. Our median score is important because if a law school is not familiar with Purdue Fort Wayne, then they consult the median LSAT score for the school. The lower the median score, the more likely a law school is to think that grades have been inflated on students’ transcripts. That means that they might treat A-quality work as deserving of a B. So be prepared when you go in to take the test.

**So test preparation really does improve student scores?**

Research and personal experiences demonstrate that LSAT preparation definitely tends to improve students’ scores. Many students have found that taking LSAT prep courses, while expensive, to be extremely beneficial. One student interviewed felt the prep course helped raise his overall score 12 points from the first practice test to the actual LSAT. While it’s not uncommon to spend upwards of $1,000 dollars on test prep, a high score can possibly earn a student a partial tuition scholarship which can more than offset the cost of prep materials. At the very least, test prep allows you to familiarize yourself with the question types and answer formats, understand the directions, and adjust to the demands of time limitations. Some students prefer to take the LSAT while the semester is in session to take advantage of studying and test-taking momentum. Whether you take the test in June, October, December, or February, keep in mind that studying for the LSAT can easily take 80 hours or more of prep time. And further, studies suggest that those who utilize more sources in the course of their preparations seem to do the best. Most university bookstores and pre-law advisors will make available additional study materials.

**How can I prepare for the LSAT?**

There are multiple ways to get ready to take the LSAT. Students can find information on test preparation and free materials at [LSAC.org](http://LSAC.org). There are lists of websites and resource materials in the last sections of our complete handbook, but students can begin the preparation process by enrolling in a study class, and/or checking out or purchasing practice books. It’s helpful to practice making effective diagrams for answering analytical reasoning questions and determining how best to read and annotate the reading comprehension passages. Try to take at least one test under timed restraints in order to know what the time limits actually feel like. This will make it clear that you can’t dwell too much on any one question and allow you the practice of pacing yourself. Additionally, once you’ve taken the test in a timed setting you’ll get a better idea of your strengths and weaknesses and thus be able to work to improve your score. Feedback from former and current students seem to indicate that while group study sessions can be helpful, the best way to prepare is individual study time.
**How do I register?**

Students have to register for the LSAT in advance of their test-taking date either online, by phone, or by mail. *It’s in your interest to register for the LSAT as soon as you decide when and where to take it.* And when you register for the LSAT you can also register for the mandatory Credential Assembly Service provided by the LSDAS which serves as a clearing house for collecting and transmitting undergraduate transcripts, letters of recommendation, and applications for law schools.

**What does it cost to take the LSAT?**

The basic fees for the test and registering with the LSDAS vary year by year, but at the time of this writing, they are approximately $190 and $195 respectively. Fee waivers for both are available for applicants with demonstrable financial need. If you need fee waivers for the LSAT registration and LSDAS subscription you’ll have to explain your financial hardship to a law school admissions office. In their capacity of authorizing fee waiver requests, each law school functions as an agent of the Law School Admission Council. But you need to apply early since schools have limited resources for waiving fees. For the most current information, please visit the [Fees and Fee Waivers page](https://LSAC.org) at LSAC.org.

**Is the LSAT a reliable measure of an applicant’s ability to succeed in law school?**

The LSAT is a critical factor in the initial sorting and ordering of applicants because it has been shown to be a statistically significant predictor of first-year performance. **While important,** the LSAT is not a perfect indication of future success in law school because it doesn’t measure intangibles such as work ethic and drive that are particular to each individual.

**Is it advantageous to retake the test and try to improve your score?**

On average, retesting tends to improve previous scores slightly, with a significant amount finding that they received the same or a lower score. Additionally, while the American Bar Association says law schools are to take the higher of one’s test scores, admissions personnel have reported that most top law scores appear to average students’ LSAT scores.